

**CHALLENGES OF DIVORCEES IN THE REFORMED  
CHURCHES OF SOUTH AFRICA WITHIN THE VHEMBE  
DISTRICT: TOWARDS AN AFRO-SENSED APPROACH  
TO PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELLING**

by

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## Declaration

I, Takalani Peter Mulovhedzi, declare that this research presented is my own and original work and has not been submitted it for any degree at any other university or institution. The research does not contain another person's writing unless specifically acknowledged and referenced accordingly.

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Signature

Date

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to my local church, the Mutshundudi Reformed Church, and to the pastors of the Reformed Churches South Africa. May the Lord God Almighty bless you as you read through this document. Finally, I commend this work to all divorcees in the church-wide. God loves you!

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## Abstract

The challenges facing divorcees when it comes to pastoral care and counselling are among the toughest to face members of the Reformed Churches South Africa (RCSA) in the Vhembe District today. There are many people in South Africa who are experiencing the pain of being divorced. The RCSA in the Vhembe District are also faced with this challenge and it affects their doctrines and their practical ministries. These challenges also affect the pastors of the RCSA.

The aim of this research is to investigate the challenges that divorcees face regarding pastoral care and counselling in the RCSA in the Vhembe District, Limpopo, South Africa in order to develop an approach to pastoral care and counselling to support divorcees so that they may learn to cope with their challenges. Caring and counselling for the divorcees is the primary mission of the church.

The study utilised a qualitative, exploratory, descriptive, and contextual design to obtain data from the participants within the RCSA in the Vhembe District. A sample of 30 participants (divorcees) from the RCSA in the Vhembe District was used. Data were collected on an individual basis by means of unstructured interviews. The qualitative data were collected and analysed using the six steps of open coding proposed by Tesch in an effort to understand personal experiences of divorcees.

The research used Graham Redding's approach to establish trustworthiness. The study adhered to four criteria to assess the value of the findings of qualitative research, namely credibility, applicability, consistency, and conformability. The ethical considerations were taken into account.

The findings of this study show that divorcees experience many challenges, and that Reformed pastors are not equipped and not doing enough to address those challenges. This research helps to enhance the quality of pastoral care and counselling to the divorcees within the RCSA in the Vhembe District. The findings and recommendations of the study are useful in guiding all Reformed pastors in providing pastoral care and counselling to divorcees.

**Key Words:** Divorce, Divorcees, Pastoral Care, Pastoral Counselling, Support.

## List of Abbreviations

CMC – Central Methodist Church

FEC – Family Enrichment Conference

GN – Good News

LP – Limpopo Province

NLT – New Living Translation

RCO – Reformed Church Order

RCSA – Reformed Churches of South Africa

RCSAVD – Reformed Churches of South Africa in the Vhembe District

SACC – South African Council of Churches

UHDC – University Higher Degrees Committee

UREC – University Research Ethics Committee VD – Vhembe District

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background and Introduction to the Study

Divorce is a global challenge that has spiritual, emotional, and psychosocial implications for the divorcees. Craig (1983) reveals that each year over one million marriages end in divorce. For every two marriages that succeed, one is expected to fail. More than five out of every one thousand people are divorced (U.S. Dept. of Commerce, 1982). These figures reveal a dramatic change in the idea of a lifelong marriage with which we all grew up. Today marriages fail as a matter of course, with the result that millions of divorced people each year must pick up the pieces and start their lives all over again. However, common and expected as divorce is, it does create havoc in people's lives, turning their world upside down for months and sometimes years. In an effort to find out exactly what happens to people after they divorce, Hetherington et al. (1978) studied 96 divorced couples with children for a 2-year period. They found that many of the divorced men and women experienced a wide range of challenges they had not encountered while they were married. Wheat (2000) indicates that statistically, there are fewer divorces when people marry at the right age, 26 being the best time for a woman and 27-31 the best for a man. Three out of five teenage marriages now end in divorce. Munroe (2003) indicates that much of the global modern society is experiencing the negative consequences of this divorce tragedy. Tembe (2010) supports this by asserting that divorce is no longer a local issue, but a global concern. Lichi (2015) reveals that divorce also affects Christians just as much as anyone else; it is a challenge that is confronting the entire world. According to Stephen (2015), globally, other than the death of an immediate family member, divorce is the most stressful event that can affect a family in society today. Children in the family may feel a great loss as well as anxiety, anger, sadness and fear of being abandoned or losing their parent's love. In this study, the researcher investigates the challenges that divorcees face.

In Africa, the pain of being a divorcee is a daily experience for many Christians. Many African divorcees are in great pain, suffer from depression, are distrustful, and lack hope. This is true in rural and urban areas (Waruta & Kinoti, 1994). Nigerian pastor, Bola Akin-John (2009), while addressing African pastors attending the International Church Conference in Lagos from 31<sup>st</sup> August - 4<sup>th</sup> September 2009, made this plea: "Let there be room for care and counselling. Let your people have

the chance to talk to you. Lead them in the way and will of God through your godly care and counselling ministry. Always be available to give care and counselling to your people.” According to Aguru (2014), divorce is a growing social ill in Africa due to several factors, including childlessness, adultery, quarrelling and bad communication in marriage, alcoholism, socialization and technological advancement, financial difficulties, immaturity, mixed marriage, adverse influence of in-laws, religious affiliation, educational attainment, and lack of pre-marital counselling. A bishop from Ghana, Mills (2008), in his book *Model Marriage* mentions seven possible causes of divorce: Adultery, which leads to mistrust and eventually a breakdown of the whole marital union; unresolved hurts and offences, which lead to a state of chronic unhappiness and depression; violence in a marriage where one party resorts to violence and sharp abusive words to resolve conflicts; childlessness in cases where some people allow this situation to degenerate into a break-up of the relationship; long separation where one spouse travels to live in another country and the other is unable to join due to the inability to obtain the necessary visa; interference from relatives and friends (too much parental influence and control, too many dependents from extended family members); wives who fail to humble before their husbands; lack of sexual satisfaction; and a bad attitude that cannot respond to advice, rebuke, admonishing or entreaties from anyone, including the pastors.

Similarly, in South Africa, divorce is a challenge in terms of growth and the impact it has on family life and churches. Thousands of couples get divorced every year. According to Nembudani (2014), the divorce rate is very high and has increased annually in South Africa. In 1990 just below 15 000 women divorced, and by the year 2000 this had increased to 35 000. Preller (2015) reveals that of the 21 998 completed divorce forms that were received and processed from 2002 to the end of September 2012, the total number of divorces fluctuated over the period of 2002 to 2012, with the highest number of 32 484 in 2005. White couples dominated from 2002 to 2007; but Black couples showed the highest statistic up until 2012. In 2002, 45, 2% of the couples were White, whereas 22, 5% were Black couples. By 2012, 33, 2% of the divorcees were Black and 32, 9% were Whites. Focussing closer to the study area, according to Phaswana (2000), one factor that causes divorce among the Vhavenda people of Vhembe District includes claims of witchcraft, called “*muloi*”, wife-beating and maltreatment, neglect of household duties by the wife, neglect of the wife by the husband, the problem of interfaith marriages, habitual lying, gossiping, and offences not valid as grounds for divorce.

## 1.2 Statistics for the divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District

After searching for recorded statistics of divorces in the RCSA in the minutes of synods, it became clear that there is no record of statistics in the churches. The researcher asked pastors of the RCSA in the Vhembe District to collect the current statistics to cover the two years from 2014-2015. The researcher asked the pastors to bring these statistics to the pastor's meeting of the 15<sup>th</sup> July 2015 at Vyeboom village near Vuwani town. Those pastors who did not attend were contacted telephonically for their statistics. The statistics revealed that there were 105 divorced individuals in 11 congregations, including both younger and older people. The table below reflects the statistics.

Table 1:

Statistics of divorcees during 2014-2015 in the RCSA in the Vhembe District (Source: RCSA Pastors of Vhembe District, date: 15/07/2015)

Name of congregations	Number of divorcees	Age	Gender Male	Gender Female
De hoop	14	25-55	1	13
Fundudzi	13	40-55	2	11
Musina	2	50-55	0	2
Mutale	2	50-57	0	2
Mutshedzi	9	45-52	3	6
Mutshundudi	18	40-60	3	15
Mvudi	8	46-53	3	5
Niani	15	35-55	5	10
Nzhelele	2	45-50	0	2
Vhumbedzi	16	45-58	2	14
Tshitandani	6	48-55	0	6

The statistics above show that divorce is a great challenge within the RCSA and it requires pastoral care and counselling. Based on this reality, there is a crucial need to investigate the challenges of divorcees. Clinebell (1984) indicates that pastoral care and counselling seek to utilize and integrate both the psychological human situation and the healing of persons. When divorcees are in pain, they need pastoral care and counselling. Priests in the church of Christ have a duty as pastors to heal and to restore humankind to a state of wholeness (Mwaura, 2000). Furthermore, Mwaura argues that

pastoral care in the churches should be holistic, attending to all levels of human caring, for instance the physical, moral and spiritual dimensions. Good pastoral care does not ignore the physical needs of a person or a community. At times good care has to pay attention to physical comfort, economic necessity and temporal happiness. God is concerned with human happiness, which entails health, welfare, peace and salvation (Mwaura, 2008). In the case of divorcees, pastoral care and counselling is critical if these individuals are to overcome the religious, sociological and psychological challenges. These include material, spiritual, emotional, psychological and sexual challenges. Africans themselves should conduct thorough research on the social, economic and spiritual challenges of divorcees that come from African communities, since there is little information available that provides culturally adapted guidance.

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

Divorce is a social problem that affects people differently. It has both a psychosocial and spiritual impact in the lives of divorcees. The divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District also experience challenges in their respective congregations. During the Family Enrichment Conference held on 17 January 2014, many divorcees raised concerns with regard to how the church treats them. They mentioned that divorcees are not considered for leadership positions, are rejected, discriminated against; feel depressed, isolated, intimidated, and threatened. There are divorcees who feel that they are not made part of the church, for example, when it comes to the key decisions of the church or their human dignity. They feel that the church does not support divorcees in that the church will not baptize their children and does not address their sex issues. The church knows that divorcees cannot abstain from sex since it is a necessity and physical need, and the church regard divorcees as unfaithful people. The divorcees indicated that they do not get support from other church members and pastors and they therefore feel neglected. When divorcees feel isolated and neglected by the church, some lose interest in church matters, others decide to join other churches that are more sympathetic to their situation, and still others lose hope for the future. When divorcees do not receive support, it becomes difficult for them to cope with their situation. When pastors fail to provide pastoral care and counselling to the divorcees, it increases the challenges that the divorcees face. The divorcees may experience depression as a result of failure to deal with the divorce. Some blame God for the loss of a marriage partner through divorce. Other divorcees resort to alcohol and drug abuse as a way of dealing with the pain of divorce. Some end up committing suicide because they no longer

see the value of life. Others end up being admitted to a psychiatric ward when their alternative pastoral care avenues that they look to for support does not work.

#### **1.4 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to investigate the challenges of divorcees regarding pastoral care and counselling in the RCSA in the Vhembe District. This will contribute towards the development of an approach to pastoral care and counselling to support divorcees.

#### **1.5 Research Objectives**

The following are the research objectives:

- To identify and describe the challenges of divorcees regarding pastoral care and counselling in the RCSA in the Vhembe District of Limpopo.
- To contribute towards the development of an African-orientated approach to pastoral care and counselling to support divorcees.

#### **1.6 Research Questions**

The research seeks to engage with and provide answers to the following research questions:

- What are the challenges of divorcees regarding pastoral care and counselling in the RCSA in the Vhembe District of Limpopo?
- What approach can be used to effectively support divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District of Limpopo?

#### **1.7 Significance of the Study**

This research fills a gap left by other scholars in that it focuses on investigating the challenges of divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District of Limpopo. This research is significant because it aims to identify and describe the challenges of divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District. This study will benefit the pastors of the RCSA in the Vhembe District in that they will know and understand how to provide pastoral care and counselling to divorcees who are experiencing challenges. The study will also benefit other South African pastors of other Christian churches under

the umbrella of South African Council of Churches (SACC). In this manner, divorcees can feel accepted, cared for and supported during this difficult time. The study aims to reduce the number of divorcees who are not getting support from families and churches. In addition, it aims to inform the community so that community members may know and understand the researched way to support divorcees through pastoral care and counselling.

Future researchers and students can use this study as a point of departure. The findings of this study may sensitize churches and church leaders so that they engage in programmes that will support divorcees and enable them to participate actively and freely in church activities.

## **1.8 Definitions of Operational Terms**

### **1.8.1 Marriage**

According to Knox (2015), marriage is a system of binding a man and a woman together for reproduction, care (physical and emotional), and for the socialization of offspring. It is also a legal contract between a couple and their state that regulates their economic and sexual relationship. Marriage is not only monogamous (mono means one – i.e. one husband and one wife), but also polygamous (poly means many – i.e. one husband and two or more wives; one wife and two or more husbands). Knox (2015) also talks about *gay* and *lesbian* marriage, in other words same-sex marriage or homosexuality. For the purpose of this research, marriage is when two adults (male and female), make a covenant by exchanging exchange vows, committing their lives to remain together until death. In this thesis, marriage is seen as a holy institution ordained by God, a union between man and woman, and a life-long relationship, even though in Africa marriage is not only for two people.

### **1.8.2 Divorce**

According to Glick (1987), divorce is a marital separation. It is emotionally traumatic for the individuals involved. Divorce itself involves depression. Usually the rejected party feels enormously wounded and hurt, while the rejecter often reacts with guilt. Many divorced people find that the transition to living alone is excruciatingly painful. The rejected partner becomes more distressed than the partner who introduced divorce. Knox (2015) defines divorce as the legal ending of a valid marriage contract, and as an emotionally traumatic event for everyone involved. The spouse who

has been rejected may be devastated and even suicidal. Blomquist (1986) refers to divorce as an experience of death – the death of marital relationship and death of intimacy: “It is the experience of an even deeper kind of death or series of deaths...it is a time of discovering the depths of one’s own woundedness, specifically with regard to the relationship which has ended.” According to Munroe (2003), divorce means to desert. Divorce is an injury, a wound, or a shock. It amounts to an earthquake to the systems of the body, soul, or spirit. It always results in trauma, great and small. Trauma causes distress. Some people who come to church are struggling with wounds experienced during hurtful relationships in the past. Kennedy (1996) asserts that, “We live in a country in which one out of every two marriages ends up in divorce.” For the purpose of this study, divorce is a choice that two people make to not to live together as husband and wife any longer. Divorce is within the context of marriage, without marriage there would be no divorce. God makes no provision for divorce in the Bible.

### **1.8.3 Divorcees**

Knox (2015) indicates that some divorcees break up face-to-face, some in a text message, in an email, in a voicemail, in a phone conversation, or on Facebook. Munroe (2003) defines divorcees as two married people who are divorced and who have been affected so deeply that they cannot heal themselves easily to go on with their lives. In this study, divorcees refer primarily to men and women who were once married and who are now divorced.

### **1.8.4 Counselling**

Achineku (1999) defines counselling as one of the tools of pastoral care services that embraces the curative and preventive aspects of pastoral care delivery. Here the person’s physical, psychological, spiritual, social and cultural needs are explored and addressed. According to Macarthur and Mark (1994), counselling is one of the most rewarding challenges a counsellor, pastor or rabbi can undertake. It is about solving people’s problems. It is about discovering the cause of problems and then applying pastoral principles to those causes. It is a process of helping a person sees his own problems in light of the wisdom in Christ found in the Bible. It is about change. Counselling is necessary because the Gospel proclaims that in Christ there is future hope and a present reality of renewal. Counselling means giving hope and it is an integral part of the church. It can also help the

local church in evangelism (Macarthur & Mark, 1994). The goal in counselling is always to help the counselee help him or herself. The counselee should press on to maturity and towards being an overcomer (Robertson, 1987). The word “counselling” is related to the Greek word “*poimen*”, which means to guide or attend to something like a shepherd attends to his flock of sheep. It means to care for the flock, to help the sick and to nurture them (Timothy, 1990). For the purpose of this study, especially given the African context of the study site, counselling entails giving advice (*u nea ngeletshedzo*), healing pain (*u fhodza vhutungu*), comforting (*u khuthadza*), empathy (*U pfela vhutungu*), to give support (*U nea thikhedzo*), and to help (*u thusa*). In other words, counselling in this study refers to a relationship in which one person wants to support divorcees.

### **1.8.5 Pastor**

According to Bola Akin-John (2003), a pastor is God’s spokesman and representative in the church who speaks the word of God to the people. A pastor is the servant of God who is often called the man of God and who should not lord himself over the people, but should serve them sacrificially by caring for the spiritual, physical and mental well-being of the people. A pastor is the shepherd of God’s flock. He is the leader of God who provides the vision and direction of the church. A pastor is an example to be followed in his sacrificial living, godly examples and Scriptural model. In this study, a pastor refers to an ordained minister of the church who looks after the spiritual welfare of all the congregants and who has the duty to provide spiritual care within a congregation.

### **1.8.6 Pastoral care**

Komonchak (1987) defines pastoral care as practical visitation by church to congregation members and the whole society in need. Achineku (1999) defines pastoral care as sharing God’s unconditional love with persons affected by painful situations, building up or encouraging and supporting someone who is hurting to meet his or her physical emotional or spiritual needs. Buffel (2014, p. 297) points out that in Africa there is a famous proverb that expresses pastoral care for the wellbeing of others and for the self, “*In Africa a person is a person because of other people*”. According to Malureau (2014), pastoral care is a branch of counselling that derives from the biblical image of shepherd and refers to the concern expressed within the religious community for persons in trouble or distress. This care seeks to provide mental and spiritual support through discussion, confession, prayer, Bible

study and hymns. In pastoral care, the goal is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience. In this study, pastoral care refers to a way of showing, accepting and giving love to African divorcees who are in a pain and it includes a duty to protect, encourage and mentor, feed, clothe, comfort, care, visit and restore the faith of the broken souls. Here we open our hand of caring.

### **1.8.7 Pastoral counselling**

Maldonado (1990) defines pastoral counselling as a helping and supportive service offered by the church through ordained pastors or trained laypersons to assist people in difficult situations in the process of finding better alternatives and making their own best decisions. Clinebell (1984) defines pastoral counselling as the utilization of a variety of healing or therapeutic methods to help people handle their problems and crises and to consequently experience healing of their brokenness. It is a reparative function needed when a person's growth is seriously jeopardized or blocked by crises. According to Achineku (1999), pastoral counselling is a specialized area of psychological therapy that has roots in spiritual and religious beliefs: "Where people are bruised, the church in its pastoral role supplies the balm. Where people are battered, the church restores with dignity. Where people are broken, the church brings healing. Where people are buffeted by the scourge, the church soothes. Where people are banned from society, the church provides home," The church has Good News to help people in this regard in this present life and to solve the problems. The researcher defines pastoral counselling as a pastor's task and pastors must not stand by waiting for people to request a counselling session. Pastoral counselling in churches entails helping people mentally and spiritually in their time of need by providing a service in the church that works for people's good by receiving them, sharing their distress and offering the Gospel. Pastoral counselling in the ministry to divorcees means to support a divorcee experiencing emotional pain and struggling in life after divorce.

### **1.9 Delimitations of the Study**

This kind of study appears to be of national relevance, but the scope of this study was delimited to the RCSA in the Vhembe District, Limpopo. Generalization with other districts of Limpopo will not be applicable.

### 1.10 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework can be defined as “a structure that guides research by relying on a formal theory constructed by using an established, coherent explanation of certain phenomena and relationships” (Eisenhart, 1991). For the purpose of this study, the pastoral care approach of shepherding is used as a theoretical framework or as a guide of the study, following Graham Redding’s (2012) concept of caring. This approach is based on the Biblical tradition’s presentation of God as the one who cures and cares for souls. The approach shows the ways in which the practice theory supports divorcees. These ways include worship, prayer, healing, care, counselling, faith formation, discipline, code of conduct, contexts of pastoral care, ministering to those who are in pain, and maintaining personal health and wellbeing. The following questions direct the effort to use this approach as a guide: *What are the challenges regarding worship, prayer, healing? What are the challenges of care, counselling, faith formation, discipline, code of conduct, of ministering to those who are in pain, and maintaining personal health and wellbeing?* This shepherding approach serves as a framework for an approach to support divorcees and to ensure that churches and church members are equipped to adequately care and counsel divorcees.

With this approach, RCSA pastors can help divorcees to heal from their traumatic challenges. The theoretical framework of this study is derived from the Word of God, which contributes greatly in encouraging divorcees to follow Biblical guidelines and God’s instruction in responding to their challenges. The goal of the Word of God is to cure souls and save people’s lives.

### 1.11 Chapter Outline

This study’s chapter outline is as follows:

*Chapter 1:* Provides background and introduces the study.

*Chapter 2:* Presents a literature review of pastoral care and counselling.

*Chapter 3:* Outlines the research methodology used in conducting the study.

*Chapter 4:* Present the findings of the research.

*Chapter 5:* Presents a discussion of the findings of the research.

*Chapter 6:* Provides an evaluation; makes recommendations and concludes the research.

## **1.12 Conclusion**

This chapter presented a background to the study on pastoral care and counselling aimed at addressing the challenges of divorcees in the RCSA within the Vhembe District. It focuses on the challenges that divorcees experience after divorce and on how these individuals are treated. The chapter outlines the research question, objectives of the study, the research methodology and the delimitations of the study. Chapter Two offers a literature review of pastoral care and counselling.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW OF PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELLING**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter critically reviews the literature on the challenges of divorcees that need to be addressed by pastoral care and counselling. The chapter examines the work of different authoritative scholars who have conducted extensive research on the subject of pastoral care and counselling. The aim is to understand how other scholars conducted their research and to identify the gaps in scholarship. Different authors expose different challenges that need pastoral care and counselling while trying to help people in the church. Although the literature review considers sources from all over the world, the challenges that divorcees face are critically analysed from an African experiences and worldview to address the needs of African divorcees in times of challenge.

As a result of the shortcomings of the current pastoral care to divorcees, some of these individuals turn to the care and counselling of African traditional healers and African Indigenous Church ministries to address their existential crises. This problem leads to a lack of trust in the power of God as represented by the RCSA and to insufficient faith maturity. According to Redding (2012), when a problem such as divorce is identified, Christians do not have a monopoly on acts of care and compassion, but such acts do lie at the heart of our calling to follow Jesus, the One who travelled through all the cities and villages, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom of God. Wherever Jesus went, he healed people of every sort of disease and illness. He felt great pity for the crowds that came, because their problems were so great and they didn't know where to go for help. They were like sheep without a shepherd (Matt. 9:35-36).

The chapter starts out with a historical background of pastoral care and counselling, followed by a discussion of pastoral care and counselling tailored to the challenges of African divorcees. It examines the church's neglect of pastoral care and counselling, the consequences of the neglect of the African cultural experiences and practices and the need for rethinking pastoral care and counselling in Africa. The chapter then provides an overview of the history of the RCSA in the Vhembe District and probes the Reformed view of the true church, the Reformed understanding of pastoral care and counselling and other concepts of pastoral care and counselling in the RCSA. The

discussion looks at specific principles governing pastoral care in the RCSA, pastoral care and counselling to divorcees, visiting divorcees in homes in the RCSA, the concept “caring and counselling” in the African sense, the African view of divorce and causes of divorce in Africa. The chapter then offers Reformed principles for pastoral care and counselling and looks at how Jesus Christ himself connects pastoral care and counselling with the caring and counselling practices of the church.

## 2.2 Historical Background of Pastoral Care and Counselling

Clinebell’s (1989) *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counselling* is a standard text for pastoral care and counselling training. While Clinebell’s book is a more general work, it nevertheless provides definitions and overviews of different pastoral counselling practices. The book offers foundational material for pastoral counselling. Pastoral care refers to practical visitation from the church to congregation members and the whole of society in need. According to Clinebell, pastoral counselling is the utilization of a variety of healing or therapeutic methods to help people handle their problems and crises and to experience healing of their brokenness. The researcher concurs with Clinebell in that pastors, as healers of wounds, should provide care and counselling so that people can cope with their situations.

Maldonado (1990) states that pastoral counselling is a helping and supportive service offered by the church through ordained pastors or trained lay persons to assist people in difficult situations. Maldonado’s main idea is useful, because even the RCSA Order acknowledges that pastoral care and counselling is there to help and support someone who is in a difficult situation (Vorster, 2003). It is the opinion of the researcher that specialized healers and ministers should provide care and counselling to people, including divorcees. Pastors should play the role of intermediary between the divorcees and church members so that whatever relationships might have been broken, are restored. Indeed, pastors should know that it is their responsibility to renew the relationship that has been broken between persons and God. It is clear in the RCSA Church Order that pastoral counselling is a pastor’s task and therefore pastors must not stand by waiting for people to request a counselling session.

Mwaura (2000) states that the church in its role as 'Shepherd' of God's flock must address herself to people's situation by alleviating suffering and enabling the realization of God's Kingdom. He adds that prayer may be used to remind the victim of the presence and grace of God in every circumstance of life. Pastors must emphasize that nothing will separate us from the love of God. The church has a duty to call Christians worldwide to treat those who are suffering with compassion, care and a non-judgmental attitude, recalling that Jesus healed the outcasts and the wounded of the world without judging them or blaming them for their conditions. This means that pastors should not blame, condemn or judge divorcees. The Bible states clearly that Jesus came in this world to save humankind from sinfulness, suffering, sickness and death. Pastors should highlight that being a divorcee is not a punishment from God, but it is an opportunity for the church to care for the divorcees and to minister to people with love and compassion. Healing is the primary mission of the church as the body of Christ. If given pastoral support, divorcees will know that in all their pain they are not left alone, but they will feel comforted and cared for by the church to which they belong.

Waruta and Kinoti (2000) state that the foundation of pastoral care is God the Creator. They explain that the motive of God's mission (*missio Dei*) on earth is propelled by His eternal love, which is what led to the creation of human beings in His image (*imago Dei*). The principle of *imago Dei* therefore expresses the sanctity of human life as worthy of preservation, support, and protection. The *missio Dei* reveals a compassionate and loving God whose interest in humankind as his own image (*imago Dei*) is to identify with them in their human situation.

Guriras (2002) addresses the issue of pastoral care and counselling from the perspective of rape. He addresses this question by looking at women irrespective of their colour, race, age or religion, taking into consideration their pastoral needs. In her book, she indicates that the rape crisis intensifies daily and this shows that women are not even safe in their homes because they fear for their lives every day. She further says that the social issues that contribute to the rape of women can be attributed to the fact that most men abuse alcohol, some of the men are unemployed, and most of the people live in poverty. In her book she states explicitly that the church can launch awareness programmes and educate its members on moral sexual behaviour. She also encourages churches and pastors to play a vital role in supporting rape survivors through pastoral care and counselling in order for them to regain their dignity. Furthermore, she advises women to regard rape as a crime that should be reported to the police and she urges them to seek help and to speak out against rape and to not be

silent on this issue. Building on her work, this study investigates the challenges of divorcees. Like rape, divorce is a devastating and traumatic event that is ever increasing in our society and the church.

Msomi (2008) argues that “it is appropriate for pastoral care and counselling as a discipline to continually take seriously the cultural, social, religious and political factors in the context of its operation.” Msomi states that this is a time for pastoral theologians to claim the unique vantage point offered by an integrative stance and multidisciplinary training and vision. It is the crucial position for contributing to the central agenda of our age and it must begin with a shift in the way we define the essential nature of pastoral counselling and a broader model of the pastoral counsellor as a person, as a professional and as a culturally capable therapist. In Msomi’s view, pastoral care is concerned with ministering to the person within the context where he or she finds him/herself.

Manala (2009) contends that ministry to the sick in Africa as practised in mainline churches does not take into account of the African cultural experiences and expression. In his book, his focus is on pastoral care to the sick in the Hervormde Kerk denomination. The belief systems of Africans with the inclusion of the role of ancestors, witchcraft, relational disruptions and curses, in the causation of sicknesses and other misfortunes are ignored as meaningless. From the point of view of the Western world, which has been influenced by Enlightenment thinking, the existence of ancestors, witchcraft and curses is rejected. Many mainline churches articulate and implement their ministry to the sick with little or no attention or consideration given to the African cultural experiences and expression. Ministry to the sick as practised in churches does not contribute effectively to the improvement of the health of Black Africans. The sicknesses of some Black African Christians who belong to mainline churches resist the pastoral and medical treatment they receive. This prompts such members to look for alternative healthcare avenues. Many members consult sangomas, traditional healers, African Independent Church prophets and others for healing in addition to medical and pastoral care and counselling. The problem encountered in Christian missionary and ecclesiastical history is that Christ’s commission to his disciples to heal the sick is neglected. If pastoral care and counselling do not undermine the needs of divorcees, divorcees may respond positively to the church’s support.

Ayankeye’s (2013) publication focuses on the application of some functions of pastoral care that can be of help while pastoral caregivers and counsellors are caring for childless couples in Africa. The

functions are educating and healing (curative). The intention is to avail pastoral caregivers with a handy guideline in the process of ministering to involuntary childless couples in Africa. In his book, he states that childlessness is a serious challenge confronting many couples in Africa at present. Due to the influence of western civilization, some African couples now voluntarily choose either to delay childbearing or to not to have a child at all. However, there are those who are painfully going through childless experiences outside their own volition. This could be due to some medical or social issues personal to the couples concerned. Being Africans, many Christian couples going through involuntary childlessness keep seeking a solution to the problem to the point that some do not care whether the way and places they seek help are congruent with their Christianity or not. Ayankeye (2013) indicates that, in Africa, the phenomenon of involuntary childlessness is a serious one since parenthood is given a pride of place. The fact that there is still a high population growth has not removed the trauma associated with the inability to reproduce within the African society. His book considers educational, curative and sustaining or supportive approaches to the pastoral care of childlessness among the Christians in Africa. Consideration is given to church-wide enlightenment and the pastoral care functional approach as a panacea for involuntary childlessness. When discussing the sustaining approach, he emphasizes the need for contextualization and inclusiveness and empathy in pastoral care. Biblically and theologically sound pastoral care coupled with follow-up is also a sustaining approach. The sustaining function of the cure of souls in our day continues to be crucially important. Life can be bearable for the childless Christian couples who are not expected to seek solutions to their plight through means that are not congruent with their Christian faith. This will be possible if pastoral care and counselling apply the functions of educating, healing and sustaining in the process of helping Christian in Africa who face the challenge of involuntary childlessness.

Buffel (2014) addresses the issue of pastoral care with children in crisis in a context of HIV and AIDS. In his book, he investigates how women caregivers look after girls from Zimbabwe in the context of HIV and AIDS to understand their pastoral care and practice. Many young girls who live in South Africa have been forced to migrate here after socio-economic, political and emotional ordeals. Most of them have been physically, sexually and emotionally abused during their migration to South Africa. Many were accommodated at the Central Methodist Church in Johannesburg. Buffel says the church provides shelter and security to them as a way of practicing pastoral care. For him,

the purpose of pastoral care is to respond to the needs of all members of God's community so that all can live a full and abundant life. It is also important to give pastoral care to divorcees in the context of South Africa.

### **2.3 Pastoral Care and Counselling aimed at the challenges of divorcees in Africa**

Kimati (1994) indicates that Africa is known as a continent where divorce is not easy. This is a challenge that also faces all churches operating in Africa. The question is whether the church in South Africa as a caring church contributes meaningfully to the national and continental vision of "*a better life for all*" or more directly, "*good caring for all*", especially in respect of African Christians who are experiencing the challenges associated with divorce. Churches in both rural and urban areas of South Africa and Africa face a serious challenge of serving the congregants in a way that makes sense to African divorcees, many of whom are still attached to the African culture. The word "*African*" is used here to refer to those people who were classified under the colonial and apartheid rule in South Africa and elsewhere as natives, *Bantus*, non-Europeans and so forth. Black churches are facing many challenges. Ministry in the African independent churches is about re-centring indigenous cultural values and spirituality. In this research, the challenges that divorcees face demand appropriate pastoral care and counselling to these individuals, in this case Black Christian church members.

Having a growing number of divorcees is a serious threat to life. Kimati (1994) states the following in relation to the care and counselling that should be rendered to divorcees: "These are the thorny issues of divorcees. African theologians will be challenged to come up with relevant African theology. We need a theology that will not weaken the Gospel content, but one that will be incarnational in nature and will meet our people's needs in their changing contexts." This is the case also with most African churches.

In Africa, pastoral care and counselling to divorcees as practised in many mainline churches does not take into account the African thought and cultural experiences. The context from which many of these churches practice pastoral care and counselling to the people is the Western worldview, which ignores the African culture and sees it as meaningless. Many mainline churches, including ones that render services to the indigenous peoples of Africa, implement their pastoral care and counselling to

the divorcees with little or no attention to the African worldview. Pastoral care and counselling as practised in mainline churches does not contribute effectively to the improvement of the caring and counselling of Black Africans. This is evident from the fact that the divorcees of some Black African Christians who belong to mainline churches resist the pastoral care and counselling they receive. This prompts such members to look for alternative spiritual care avenues. Many of these members consult sangomas, traditional healers, and African Independent Church prophets and so forth to receive care and counselling. The question is why they are assisted with their challenges. Is there anything that the mainline churches can do to address this situation? I believe mainline churches have to desist from imposing Western approaches and strategies and despising African approaches. The other consequence of mainline churches' reliance upon the Western approaches and strategies to the exclusion of the African worldview is the loss of membership and negative growth because members look and go elsewhere for their needed services (Igenza 1994).

#### **2.4 African Approach to Pastoral Care and Counselling**

The church in Africa should take the African culture, values and practices seriously in her pastoral care and counselling practice without any question. Uzukwu (1996) makes this point quite clear: "Christians in Africa need the African base to construct a church which bears credible witness to the risen Jesus. This base must be founded on the retrieval of our fundamental indigenous cultural values." Imasogie (1993) too makes important assumptions that necessitate a serious reconsideration of pastoral care and counselling in Africa. Those assumptions are stated quite strongly: Christianity is an incarnational religion. Africans' commitment to Christ is the result of the failure of Christian theologians to take the African context seriously. This thesis intends to identify and describe the challenges of divorcees towards an Afro-sense approach to pastoral care and counselling. The research is intended as a practical-theological enquiry into the pastoral care and counselling practice aimed at divorcees who are experiencing challenges.

As a Black pastor who has served the RCSA in the Vhembe District for many years, I have been exposed to situations of desperation in which divorcees struggle in vain to get pastoral care and counselling support to cure and heal them. The cause of this struggle is that divorcees are experiencing painful challenges. This situation has its origin in numerous African cultural beliefs. These African cultural beliefs are a challenge in terms of pastoral care and counselling. If the

churches do not make a serious effort to seek a thorough understanding of the African thought and cultural experiences, it will be difficult for the church to support African divorcees. The existence of these cultural beliefs cause African Christians to live at two levels, that is, “their traditional worldview level and the Western cultural level” (Setiloane, 2000). A good understanding and respect for the African thought and cultural experiences, beliefs, values and culture when offering pastoral care and counselling are of great significance to the caring processes among Africans. The church that operates in Africa needs to take seriously African people’s existential crises. The ecclesiastical history is that Christ commissioned his disciples to care for the church members, not to neglect them.

## **2.5 An Overview of the History of RCSA in the Vhembe District**

According to Heyns and Pieterse (1990), church history is a component of the theological tradition. The RCSA consists of both Black and White churches. White churches operate from the perspective of the Western worldview. On the other hand, Black churches operate among the people of Africa and its pastoral care and counselling occurs among these people. According to Phaswana (2000), the Venda Christians of the Vhembe District were the most antagonistic towards European settlement and until 1872; no missionary was allowed to settle among them. Even prior to this date, they made use of the White man for their own ends, instead of showing their hatred of him. The Lutheran Church was the biggest in Venda around 1872. The first missionary station was set up at Ha-Tshivhasa. This station was later renamed Carl Beuster. Phaswana (2000) indicates that in 1874, the honourable Erdmann Schewellnus started another station at Tshakhuma. With the help of prominent local community leaders, the missionaries laid a strong foundation. Phaswana (2000) retells that under the leadership of the late Prof Hugo du Plessis, a mission station of the RCSA was set up in the Nzhelele area in 1928. A hospital and a school were also established at Siloam. In 1944, another mission station was set up at De Hoop (*Vuwani* and *Masia area*). From 1961, the Christian Reformed Churches of The Netherlands worked hand-in-hand with the RCSA in the area of the Vhembe District. The church also established a Bible school at Iyani near Sibasa. A chain of Christian bookshops bearing the name Mbeu (*seed*) were built. The Vhavenda Divorce files dating from 1979 when Venda became independent from the old South Africa to 1999 after the re-incorporation show that nine out of ten couples who were married and divorced, were Venda Christians, including Christians from the RCSA in the Vhembe District.

It is necessary for this research to describe the RCSA's self-understanding or theological identity. According to Van Wyk (2001:39), the question to be asked and answered concerns the essence of the church, namely what is understood under the "Holy Catholic Church of Christ?" The answer is found in the Heidelberg Catechism, which is one of important creedal resources of the RCSA. The following is then the RCSA's understanding of the reference "Holy Catholic Church of Christ" as paraphrased from the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 21:

*"1. The community that was and is being gathered out of the whole human race from the beginning until the end of the world by Christ through His Spirit and Word. 2. The community that has been chosen, defended, preserved and enlisted to God and God's service by faith in Christ and which is destined to everlasting life with Him. 3. The community of which people qualify on account of true faith in Christ to become and remain unto eternity an integral part and members. The church can be defined thus: The Holy Catholic Church of Christ refers to that community that was and continues to be gathered by Christ through His Spirit and Word in all world communities. It is the community that God so graciously elected for God self, yes the community that God defends, preserves and enlists to God self for everlasting life by faith, of which all people qualify on account of faith in Christ to be and to remain members unto eternity."*

The RCSA's self-understanding and self-presentation is in agreement with what Jonker (1995) states in his definition of the church from the Reformed perspective. Jonker posits the following two matters as the two decisive aspects that are evident in the Reformed confession: The church, its work and life is defined in *soteriological* (salvation) terms rather than in institutional terms. Following the terminology of the Apostolic Confession, the church is spiritually defined as the one, holy and catholic church; the communion of the saints. The church is identified with the body of Christ, that is, with all people who are elected and saved in Christ, from the beginning of the world until its end (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 21 and Belgic Confession 27). The church is defined as the fruit of the saving work of Christ himself through his Word and Spirit, as a *creatura Verbi*. Therefore, the marks of the true church are the purity of the gospel preached, the pure administration of the sacraments and the exercise of the church discipline (Belgic Confession, Article 27). The RCSA's

self-understanding as the communion of saints or believers (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 21 and the *Apostolicum*, article 9) means that: “

*1. Believers, individually and jointly are partakers of Christ and sharers in all His blessings and gifts. 2. Each believer should know that he/she is obliged to use his/her gifts freely and joyfully for the benefit and welfare of other members.”*

The above description of how the RCSA sees itself means that the RCSA in the Vhembe District understands her mission as that of a community that reflects and manifests Christ's true life and activities for the salvation and blessing of fellow believers and all human beings. She understands herself as having a mission to continue Christ's service on earth. However, one could ask whether these churches truly believe in all that Jesus of Nazareth believed and holds all components of Jesus' caring ministry in high esteem. The Reformation of the 16th century was preoccupied with the need to purge the church of false teachings that were based on human thoughts, experiences and tradition. For that reason, the church insisted that it should remain pure and sought criteria against which the truthfulness of the church could be measured. The following section is the Reformed view of the true church.

## **2.6 The Reformed View of the True Church**

Luther, Calvin and other reformers who shared their convictions and who wanted to correct the Roman Catholic Church's teachings, which they deemed unscriptural, heralded the Reformation. The idea of a true and a false church was born there. In Reformed tradition, a church is considered truthful when she: i) Proclaims the gospel in as pure a manner as possible. ii) Serves Sacraments in accordance with Christ's institution. iii) Exercises discipline against unrepentant members.

This implies that the church that is seen and experienced as not practicing her pastoral care and counselling in accordance with the above-mentioned pointers is considered a false church. Based on the above mentioned criteria, the RCSA also claims true church status. The question is: Are these criteria exhaustive of the requirements of the total Christian ministry that Christ entrusted to the early Christian church? The concept “*church*” refers to both the local and the universal church, both in her visible and invisible modes, as the Mother of the believers (Jonker, 1995). The purpose of Reformed theology was to build the church up “in faith and obedience to be a living church of God” (Jonker,

1995). The church of Christ is in the world for the sake of taking forward Christ's work of redemption. The relevant question at this stage concerns how the RCSA in the Vhembe District understands her pastoral care and counselling support as taking forward Christ's redemptive work.

## 2.7 Reformed Understanding of Pastoral Care and Counselling

It is important to explore the Reformed understanding of the pastoral care and counselling to the divorcees. Pastoral care and counselling in the RCSA is understood as focused on helping the individual in distress to cope with excruciating pain so that he or she can be strong in the faith. There are various concepts that express the way in which the RCSA views this function. In light of these various concepts, the discussion moves to a summary of the pastoral care and counselling ministry as practised in the RCSA.

In the RCSA, various concepts are used with reference to pastoral care and counselling. The central metaphor for pastorate is the shepherd metaphor and it is followed up with other relevant concepts regarding the proclamation of the gospel to individuals and families. These include "*episkopein*" – overseeing or supervising, visiting, caring for, concern for; "*parakalein*" – comforting, encouraging, counselling, making an appeal, soliciting and admonishing; "*nouthetein*" – warning, reproofing and admonishing; "*sterizein*" – fortifying, providing resistance against; "*katartizein*" – equipping and making complete, "*oikodomein*" - building up or edifying (Beukes, 1981: 20-26; Dreyer 1981: 21-23; van Biljon 1984: 4). The four concepts out of the above six (*poimano*, *episkopein*, *parakalein*, and *oikodomein*) that are related to the Reformed understanding of pastoral care and counselling are presented in detail below.

### 2.7.1 The shepherd metaphor

Pastors of the RCSA believe that the shepherd metaphor provides a clear picture of pastoral care and counselling (Van Biljon: 1984). The meaning, function and purpose of the pastoral care reside in the shepherd metaphor. Adams (1979:5) notes the importance of this metaphor in the definition of the pastorate ministry. He says: "The name '*pastoral*' is a unique Christian term that expresses a fundamental concept that is deeply embedded in every biblical portrayal of Christian ministry." According to Adam, it is not possible to talk about pastoral ministry without employing the shepherd metaphor. The Greek word *poimano* is used in the RCSA with its variables to denote the shepherd

and his task and responsibilities. Mills (2008) points to God's Old Testament reference to himself as the great Pastor or Shepherd who blesses and liberates Israel from distress and misery (Gn. 49:24; Ps. 23; 28:9 and 80:1,2). This liberation is expressed in God's victorious battles through which Israel was liberated from her enemies (Beukes, 1981). The shepherd metaphor one includes the comfort motif, for example Ps. 23 (Mills, 2008). God, according to the RCSA view, wants his people to always be well looked after. To this end God appoints, according to the Scripture, earthly shepherds to care of Israel as their primary task (Nm 27:17).

Caring for God's people implies keeping them on the right path, in other words keeping them in the right relationship with God and among themselves. Mills (2008) cites Ezekiel 37:24 where the task of the king as shepherd is described as preserving the unity of God's people and guiding them towards obedience to God's law. Prophets are also described in Scripture as shepherds who care for God's people corporately and individually. Their task is to comfort, admonish and encourage God's people by means of the life-giving message from God. The care of God's people is expressed also in God's pastoral task of gathering the sheep that were scattered and taken captive (Jr 31:10; Ezek. 34:12).

God does not only provide material liberation, but also spiritual liberation. He will forgive their unrighteousness and all their sins (Jr 31:34). Here the reconciliation motif is prominent. God will reconcile his people unto to himself and dwell in their midst as their rightful shepherd. Mills (2008) mentions the fact that the shepherd also has the responsibility to care for the weaker members of God's people. This is clear from God's complaint in Ezekiel 34:4 about the earthly shepherds of his people who neglected their responsibility, saying: "You have not taken care of the weak ones, bandaged those that are hurt, brought back those that wandered off, or looked for those that were lost". Since these earthly shepherds neglected their work, God promised to be the shepherd who would provide complete care to his sheep (Ezek. 34:11-16) and he appoints David to be their one shepherd (Ezek. 34:23).

The RCSA believes that in Christ Jesus, God's true shepherd has arrived to replace the dishonest shepherds of the Old Testament. In the New Testament, it is especially the Gospel according to John 10:1-18 that reveals the identity of the promised shepherd who would be the true shepherd. In this Scripture passage Jesus calls himself "the good shepherd who is willing to die for the sheep" (Jn

10:11). In Jesus, the shepherd-like care of God finds its fullest expression in the salvation of God's people (Mills, 2008). Indeed, in Jesus' life and work lies the ultimate demonstration of the full implication of God's covenantal love (Adams, 1979). Christ's care and counselling practice is expressed in his teaching in synagogues, his preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and in his healing of all diseases in the communities that he served (Mt 4:23, 13:54, Mk 1:21, 2:13, 3:7,8, 6:2; 6:34, 7:14, 10:1, Lk 4:15-16, 38-40, 6:6, 10 and so forth). The care of Jesus the great Shepherd touches on the entirety of human life (Mills, 2008). Jesus paid attention to groups and to individuals, teaching and healing various diseases and raising others from death. His caring ministry attended to both spiritual and physical dimensions of human life. As a result of this caring ministry his disciples, whom he had approached and called individually, left all their valuables and followed him. Jesus' care of the people led to God's honour and repentance by many people (Mills, 2008). The RCSA accepts her pastoral care practice as a continuation of Christ's pastoral care practice.

This pastoral care and counselling practice did not have to cease as Christ ascended to heaven. It has to be continued through the testimony of eyewitnesses to Christ's life and work, first his disciples and then his later followers, all of whom are inspired and enabled by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit grants them a wisdom that greatly informs and makes dynamic their preaching of the gospel and gives them the power to perform miracles that concretizes and proclaims salvation in Jesus Christ. It is indeed evident that Christ Jesus is himself continuing through his followers, the work that he had started (Van Biljon, 1984). This study refers specifically to supporting divorced people with pastoral care and counselling.

### **2.7.2 Episkopein**

Beukes (1981), one of the theologians from the RCSA, points to the close link between two verbs, *episkopein*, which means exercising oversight or supervision and *poimainein*, translatable with shepherding, herding, tending or taking care of. He refers to the Good News Bible translation of the concept *episkopein* namely "keep watch over", not in the sense of "rule over" or "control", but in the sense of "visiting", "caring for", "having concern for." *Episkopein* in this sense refers to that caring act that is done out of genuine concern for, and interest in the wellbeing of fellow Christians, both corporately and individually (Acts 15:36). The concept points to the fact that those who have

been given the task of being and performing duties of the *episkopos* have the responsibility to look after and care for new Christians.

It is clear that the attitude that underscores this service is that of love rather than of authority and control. The content of this caring service in the RCSA's understanding is the gospel of Jesus Christ and its purpose is to fortify believers' faith (Van Biljon, 1984). This caring act of the service that is described as *episkopein* is quite significant because the RCSA practices it as an after care or follow-up task of the church to those to whom the gospel has been preached and who have as a result come to faith in Jesus. It is understood as helpful in sustaining contact with and fostering unity among Christians (Eph. 4:16). This service (*episkopein*) is, however, not merely viewed as a follow-up, but also as a proactive service that wishes to prevent in advance possible spiritual slip-up (Van Biljon, 1984). It means providing Christians with a strong foundation for their faith and faithful living. The other most popular concept used in the RCSA to describe pastoral care is *parakalein*.

### 2.7.3 Parakalein

The second concept is *parakalein*, which is translated "comfort", "encourage", "counsel", "admonish" and so forth (Beukes, 1981). The central motif of this call is love. Comfort is one of the many tools of pastoral care as understood by the RCSA. Beukes (1981) attests to the frequent use of the verb *parakalein* and the noun *Paraklesis* in the New Testament. He ascribes the following meanings to the concept *parakalein*: to comfort, to encourage, to counsel, to put forward an urgent request or appeal and to admonish. Dreyer (1981) indicates that this service is provided both homiletically (2 Cor 5:20), through the preaching of reconciliation and pastorally (Heb 10:24), through the practice of compassionate service. Preaching and diaconal service are therefore central to *parakalein*.

Dreyer indicated that the content of *paraclesis* is reconciliation with God. It means that the focus of the pastorate as defined by the term *paraclesis* is on the calling of Christians to repentance and a good relationship with God through faith in Christ Jesus. This call is understood to have love as its core and not authority and force as it sometimes seems, for example in 1 Thessalonians 4:1. Dreyer (1981) indicates, citing Boekenstein, that the authority at issue in 1 Thessalonians 4:1 should be viewed as loving authority and not as authoritarian compulsion. *Paraclesis* is accepted in the RCSA

as referring to the actual call of God himself through the intermediary work of Christian servants under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who is the actual *Paraclete* (Beukes, 1981). This means that Christian servants render this service on behalf of, but also and importantly jointly with, following God's instructions and is inspired by God himself (Beukes, 1981). The goal is still the fortification of faith in Christ, which has to have a positive influence on the believers' life and conduct.

The nature of comforting, encouragement, appeal and admonition is according to Beukes (1981) twofold: it is on the one hand a gift of God's grace and on the other, service. God offers on the one hand absolution, justification, sanctification, and communion with God in Jesus Christ, while on the other hand he calls the Christian to God's service. In other words, it demands that the righteous of God shall be committed to God's service. The pastorate as viewed by Beukes (1981) therefore represents a balanced service in that it presents the full gospel of Jesus Christ in its indicative and imperative perspectives.

#### **2.7.4 Oikodomein**

Thirdly, there is the concept *oikodomein*, which can be translated as "building up", "edifying" (Dreyer 1981). Dreyer (1981) adds this third concept, *oikodomein*, which he presents as the ultimate purpose of the entire task of the pastorate. By *oikodomein* then, Dreyer (1981) understands the edification of the church, which is the responsibility that Christians have and should display and fulfil towards each other (1 Thess 5:11). The implication is that the entire work of the pastorate has the purpose of empowering Christians for mutual edification. All facets of the pastorate should work together towards this important goal (Rom 14:19; 15:2; 1 Cor 14:3; Eph 4:11-16) (Dreyer, 1981). These concepts extricate what RCSA theologians understand the pastorate to be. It means that when members of the RCSA come to their pastor with serious life crises, the pastor understands the actions that are required to address the situation in terms of these concepts. The concepts do cover a good scope of the caring ministry, but do not, and of course do not claim to cover all aspects of the pastorate or ministry.

## **2.8 The View of Pastoral Care and Counselling in the RCSA**

### **2.8.1 An overview**

The word “pastoral”, when used in a church context, is used almost always to refer to the entirety of the work of the pastor, which includes caring, disciplining, nurturing and so forth (Hiltner 1969). Ferguson and Wright (1988) write that: “The term is used in both a wider and a narrower sense. In its wider sense, it refers to service rendered to God and to people. In its narrower usage it denotes the officially recognized service of persons set apart (usually by formal ordination) by the church”. This narrower understanding of the word “pastoral” is, however, unfortunate because it renders the majority of Christians inactive and marginal. According to Achineku (1999), pastoral care is sharing God’s unconditional love to persons affected by a painful situation, building up or encouraging and supporting someone who is hurting to help meet his or her physical emotional or spiritual needs. He defines counselling as one of the tools of pastoral care services that embraces the curative and preventive aspects of pastoral care delivery.

Pastoral care and counselling become possible because Christ has given gifts to some people and appointed others to a variety of offices to edify his body, the church (Eph 4:10,11), for the sake of God’s glory and human salvation. Christ’s caring for people involves preaching the good news of the Kingdom of God to people, teaching, healing and prayer (Ferguson & Wright, 1988). He effectively performed the divine care, which he passed on to his church of all times. This care of Christ can best be carried out through gifts of the Spirit and ecclesial offices (Dreyer, 1987). The practice of care and counselling of the church should be guided and directed by the care of Jesus Christ in its purpose, content and action. Like the care of Jesus Christ, the care of the church has to entail the preaching of the good news of the Kingdom of God, teaching, healing and prayer services.

### **2.8.2 Pastoral care as defined in the RCSA**

The task of the church is described in Article 4 of the Church Law and Church Order of the RCSA (RCSA 1977-1988) and Article 2 and 3 of the latest edition of the Church Order of the RCSA (RCSA 2003). The church is entrusted to practice pastoral care and counselling to people who are in painful situations. Care and counselling is an important ministry in the RCSA, it is an integral part in the life of divorcees. The RCSA understands pastoral care and counselling to divorcees as dealing with the

person who is under tremendous stress as a result of excruciating pain, isolation and suffering due to divorce.

Scripture is considered as the only important source of guidelines for caring and counselling a divorcee. Pastoral care and counselling to a divorcee should therefore be according to the understanding of the Scriptures to effectively deal with conditions of pain. Coetzee (1998) writes about pastoral care to the person in pain. He says pastoral care is the expression of the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the person who is in pain in his/her unique circumstances of suffering.” The Scripture is considered the only source and norm for the pastoral care in the RCSA. The Scripture alone has the answer and final word in the explanation and interpretation of the pain of a divorcee. Kramer (1978) makes a strong point that eliminates philosophy as a possible source of answers regarding pain: “Philosophy is not the core from which we can provide an answer and final word about this problem. Only from the Scripture shall we attempt to give a complete answer by looking at what the Bible says about pain”.

Scripture is therefore the sole source of knowledge regarding divorce. Pastoral care to a divorcee is understood in the RCSA as a conversational proclamation of the Word of God to a suffering person who is in excruciating pain (Van Biljon, 1984). Dreyer (1981) writes: “The pastorate as proclamation in the form of conversation is also directed to the person in the crisis situation of suffering. The proclamation of the Word embraces the entire human life in prosperity and in adversity.” It means that the pastorate with its content, which is the Word of God, is essential for all of human life. For that reason, Dreyer (1981) says that: “one aspect of pastoral care and counselling in general is because the great Shepherd shows his care and love to people in all circumstances and therefore also in the moment of crisis and need”. He warns that the painful situation is the perfect opportunity for the proclamation of the Word and providing pastoral care (Dreyer, 1981).

God’s revelation is seen as the authentic point of orientation for pastoral care and counselling to a divorcee. God is seen as busy with truthful care and counselling through the Holy Spirit in the contextual life of the person. Van Biljon (1984) sees the task of pastoral care as concretizing the biblical truth, that is, the Word of God, in the contextual human existence. This is also the view of Coetzee (1998). Pastoral care to the divorcees is the official task of the church’s proclamation of the Word of God in a caring way. This is important to divorcees who are experiencing challenges in this

world. Pastoral care and counselling should be done from the contextual situation of the suffering person (Van Biljon, 1984). Pastoral care to the divorcee is viewed as essential components of the pastor's responsibilities in the RCSA, as is evident in the RCSA order (RCSA church order, 1988). Pastoral care to church members is included in the letter of appointment of ministers as an important part of the pastor's responsibilities. In the church, pastoral care to a divorcee has to do with the functioning of the Word of God, which has to play a role in the life of a divorcee who is experiencing challenges. Van Biljon (1984) states that pastoral care is not only proclamational, but that it is also directed at mission work. In an effort to obey and to comply with the demands of the Scripture, the churches of the Reformation drafted principles that should be followed in their pastoral practice.

## **2.9 Principles Governing Pastoral Care in the RCSA**

The RCSA subscribes to Reformed pastoral principles. These principles govern the study and practice of Theology as well as that of Practical Theology within the RCSA. These principles determine the RCSA's understanding and practice of the pastoral care to people in various conditions of need. The following are the Reformed principles that must be followed in the RCSA. Manala (2009) in his doctoral thesis lists and discusses the fact that the revelation of God in the Holy Scripture is the primary principle that governs the pastoral care and counselling practices. Van Biljon (1984) describes this principle further: (a) Pastoral care is revelation theology and not an existential theology. Humankind can never serve as source, basis and norm of pastoral care. (b). God's acts of redemption are found in the Word, which is the essential mode of revelation. (c). Pastoral care becomes true proclamation, only when it actualizes God's acts of redemption within human beings wrestling with the truth. Only then can the encounter between God and a human being during which God truly addresses humankind, take place. As a conversational proclamation, pastoral care is a para-liturgical service within the ecclesial service structure and has the edification of the body of Christ (the church) as goal. Pastoral care therefore ensures that those who hear the Word of God live in obedience to the Word and their witness about Christ will lead them back to the service of worship. The pastorate as *kerygma* acts as a Biblical follow-up, which is simultaneously proactive or preventative. Special pastoral care makes oversight unavoidable because *kerygma* includes elements of admonition, rebuke, comforting, training and encouragement.

The Spirit employs the Bible as a means through which He comforts and instructs the counselee and raises his or her faith. Special pastoral care is a focussed or specialized service to an individual who is in tribulation and, if necessary, also to the family that has to endure the pain that is inherent in that situation. It is proclamation to a person in his or her context, but it does not mean that the special pastoral care seeks in an empirical-critical way a technique for religious influence of the person in his or her concrete situation (Jonker, 1981) but rather a joint search for the truth of God's Word. That is the only way in which the redemptive revelation of God's Word can be actualized in humankind's wrestling with the truth. It remains the responsibility of the pastor to unconditionally adhere and remain loyal to the Scripture.

The pastor should proclaim the Scripture in its full richness as the authority of the Word of God. The Word of God derives this authority from the Holy Spirit. The pastor is in other words the carrier of the kerygmatic message from which his or her authority comes. His or her word therefore becomes the gracious speech to the counselee in their greatest crisis that is, the crisis of sin. Because of the fact that special pastorate is a person-focussed conversational proclamation, it is necessary that the basic elements of a successful conversation or communication be taken into account. In spite of the fact that special pastoral care adheres to theological principles, it displays some flexibility with regard to the pastoral conversation, which fits into a different method from that of the general pastorate. Although there is a systematic differentiation between various modes of proclamation, they all run in consort towards one proclamation goal, are interdependent and bear overlapping characteristics.

Where the special pastorate uses the theological-critical method, the norm applies that it should function as a fully-fledged theological discipline that is completely loyal to the Word of God. In this case, other theological disciplines interpret the pastoral labour while the pastorate determines the how of the person-focussed conversational proclamation and fulfils a stimulating and serving function within the entirety of the theological study. Furthermore, the pastorate utilizes knowledge from, and results of non-theological disciplines that are subservient to theology without falling into subjective, anthropological processes or without becoming a superficial companion of these non-theological disciplines. The axiom that applies in the special pastoral care is that everything ultimately revolves around the revelation of God in Jesus Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit, as is attested, in the Scripture and understood in the lives of people through the Word and Spirit of

God. Van Biljon (1984) concludes that a theologically balanced pastorate is kerygma, that is, communication of the Word that inspires every situation, guiding the counselee to faith in Christ. This in turn leads to a new meaning of life and transformation, to the glory of God and edification of the body of Christ through the work of the Spirit.

The above-stated principles are derived from the Holy Scripture as the Word of God. The Bible therefore has the first and the last word with regard to the pastorate in general and pastoral care or ministry to the sick in particular. The Scripture is an important source of authority for the pastoral care and counselling within the Reformed tradition. Church practice is therefore controlled and corrected by Theology (Van Biljon, 1984). Theology is necessary to authenticate ecclesial practice. The interest of this research is the pastoral care and counselling to the divorcee. This interest justifies an examination of the church views of caring and counselling to which the discussion now turns.

### **2.10 Visiting Divorcees in Homes in the RCSA**

Beukes (1981) mentions that the task of visiting those who are in pain the RCSA is founded on the church's creeds, especially the Belgic Confession, Article 30. He (Beukes, 1981) indicates that even though the creeds do not directly mention the task, there are certain indications pointing to it, for example, Article 30 of the Belgic Confession states the task of the church council as *inter alia* to see to it that the poor and the depressed receive help and comfort. The Church Order of Wezel (1568), according to Beukes (1981), states as part of the contents of pastoral care to the people, "the comforting by means of the Word of God". This "comforting" means that the Word of God should be conveyed to a divorcee in such a way that he or she will realize God's love for them even in the context of their challenges and that he or she will find comfort in that realization. The Church Order recognizes the visit to and prayers for the divorcee as an official task of the church. In the 2003 Church Order of the RCSA this task of the church is mentioned both as one of the official functions of ministers in congregations and as one of entitlements for members, respectively (Vorster, 2003). This task belongs to the list of specific tasks and responsibilities of the minister (Vorster, 2003). The basis for the task of visiting the divorcees who are church members is also found in church decisions. Beukes (1981) mentions that the provincial synod of Dordrecht stipulated that along with the comforting of the people there should if necessary be the invocation of the name of the Lord in prayer.

The appointment letters for pastors of RCSA mention the comforting of the people as part of the pastor's task and responsibility (Dreyer, 1981). It is quite clear that the comforting of those who are in pain is an important task that the churches of the Reformation acknowledge and regard as imperative. This is also clearly stated in the ministers' ordination formularies of the RCSA. According to these formularies, the task of ministers entails: "Firstly, the thorough and sincere preaching and application of the Word of the Lord revealed in the writings of prophets and apostles to their congregations in general and in particular... by comforting and correcting in the light of each one's own needs".

Visiting church members with the purpose of comforting them is also the task and responsibility of church elders and deacons in the RCSA (Beukes, 1981, also James 5:14, Formulary for the induction of elders and deacons). Elders and deacons therefore also have the responsibility to carry out the task of visiting church members with the goal of comforting them. Ministers, elders and deacons of the RCSA are expected to carry out the church's care to the people. Concerning the content of the task of visiting the divorcee, Dreyer (1981) refers to the pastor in pastoral care as the bearer and conveyor of God's love, mercy and care over all people, especially those who are experiencing trials. The content is therefore the proclamation of God's Word.

Redding's (2012) also describes the primary contents of the church's task of visiting those in trials as the preaching of God's Word in its comforting dimensions. He cites many text verses that testify to Christ's work of proclamation and caring of people. Pointing to Jesus' caring of suffering people and the care of his disciples, Redding's (2012), citing Mark 16:20, notes that miracles of healing are indicative of God's collaboration with the disciples and His validation of their preaching. The miracles of healing confirm, according to Beukes (1981), the message of the disciples that in Jesus Christ, sin and death have been overcome and that in him the cause of all human distress, misery and sickness has been cancelled. It is the RCSA's official task to visit the divorcees at their homes so that they may be cared for. The other strategy that is employed in the RCSA's pastoral care and counselling ministry to the divorcee is the church's ministry.

House visitation to church members is a must in the RCSA. Visiting divorcees has always been an integral part of the RCSA's service to her members who are divorced. The RCSA views this service as an official task of the church that can be inferred from various Scriptural passages, including the

description of the final judgement as recorded in Matthew 25:36 and its opposite in verse 43 and James 5:14. From the inception of his public ministry, Jesus paired the proclamation of the good news of the Kingdom of God with healing (Matt. 4:23-24; Lk. 6:17-19). When he sent his twelve disciples to the lost sheep of Israel for example, he commanded them: “Go and preach, ‘The Kingdom of heaven is near!’ Heal the sick, bring the dead back to life, heal those who suffer from dreaded skin-diseases, and drive out demons” (Mt 10:23-24; Lk. 9:1-6). Caring is therefore understood in the RCSA as Christ’s commission to his disciples and followers. There are many other Scriptural passages from which the mandate to care can be inferred.

### **2.11 Pastoral Care and Counselling as a Comfort in the RCSA**

According to Spykman (1969), Christian comfort is one of the central themes in the pastoral care and counselling of the RCSA. He highlights the words of the prophet Isaiah, words of comfort for God’s people (Isaiah 40:1). According to him, comfort is the only thing in the world people need during hard times. Even today, divorcees in their hard times need comfort, for they are facing painful challenges. Comfort, therefore, means having someone standing with you to make you strong. It means having the courage to live bravely. It means strength to face troubles. Comfort is happiness. It is not an old-fashioned idea. It is as current as salvation and service. In times of suffering, a divorcee needs a friend who will stick with them through thick and thin. That is what comfort is—knowing Christ as the Saviour and Lord, and knowing that He is always at their side. Comfort is happiness, satisfaction, strength, and courage.

When divorce happens as something bad and then something else takes its place and makes up for it and lifts the person – that is comfort. When you are lonely, and then the telephone rings and it’s your best friend on the other end – that is comfort. When a soldier in battle gets a love letter from home – that is comfort. The Catechism is a text dedicated to Christian comfort. Kuyvenhoven (1989) indicates that comfort in pastoral care and counselling is a good thing that takes care of a bad situation. Sometimes it acts as a tear-dryer. Sometimes it is a shot in the arm. Comfort is the strength to keep going. Comfort in pastoral care and counselling is survival power. All people need comfort when going through ordinary troubles of human existence. In the RCSA, Christian comfort as part of pastoral care and counselling entails that we have heard in the gospel and we spell out in our confession: *We belong to Jesus*. That is the confession of the church.

The whole Christian church, in Heidelberg and Holland, in Japan, and Jamaica, in China and Chile, in America and Africa, has only one comfort: *We belong to Jesus*. That is the flag of our ship and the confession in our books: We are the property of Jesus Christ. If this comfort is included during pastoral care and counselling and this knowledge of belonging to Christ enters the consciousness of divorcees, they can endure all pain, fight every battle, and be confident of the outcome. According to Kyvenhoven (1989), the people who confessed this in the time of the Reformation were persecuted for their faith. They feared for their lives. But, they said, even if we get killed, we belong to Jesus, body and soul, in life and death. They confessed their comfort in the face of all threats. Pastoral care and counselling to the divorcee is understood as conversational proclamation of the gospel to the suffering person; it is an official task of the church.

## 2.12 RCSA Principles of Pastoral Care and Counselling

According to Manala (2009), there are five basic principles of the Reformation that influence the ministry of pastoral care and counselling in churches of the Reformed tradition. These principles influence the attitude and conduct, and work and life of the RCSA can also be basis for basis for pastoral care and counselling practices. Those principles are the Reformed tradition's "**five solas**", and they are as follows: "*Sola Scriptura*", "*Sola Fide*", "*Sola Gratia*", "*Sola Christus*" and "*Soli Deo Gloria*". These "five solas" are also known as five pillars of Calvinism/Reformed tradition.

### 2.12.1 *Sola Scriptura*

The first of these principles is *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone). By this principle, the Reformers put the relationship between biblical revelation and ecclesiastical tradition into proper perspective. Deist (1990) describes the *Sola Scriptura* principle as: "The theology and knowledge of God that is based on the Scripture only and not on ecclesiastical tradition." According to the above description, the Scriptural message should be of primary importance and therefore of absolute authority in matters of theology and knowledge of God. It implies that in her life, as ambassador for Christ, in her work, and in her witness to the life and work of Jesus Christ, the church needs to listen more carefully and obediently to the message of the Bible. The relevant question in light of the *Sola Scriptura* principle and in view of the concern of this thesis is: What has caused the RCSA not to listen carefully and obediently to Christ's commission with special reference to the caring and counselling ministry and

practices? Why did they only see care and counselling as important in a pastoral perspective? The principle of *Sola Scriptura* does not seem to have anything against Christ's caring, healing and counselling ministry. It actually demands that Jesus' followers should listen more carefully and obediently to the inspired Word of God contained in the Scripture. The Word of God as contained in the Scripture, which the church should listen to, includes to my mind Christ's commission to his disciples to care, heal and counsel the divorcee. This has unfortunately largely been rejected and neglected, as shown in Chapter 1. The reason for the church's rejection and neglect of the caring, healing and counselling ministry and practices does not seem to have been motivated by the *Sola Scriptura* principle in particular. Therefore, the church's neglect of the caring, healing and counselling ministry seems to come from as Kraft (1989) rightly states, the difficulty to really listen obediently to God. Scripture is the sole norm and source of knowledge in matters of divorce, and therefore of the pastoral care and counselling to the divorcee.

### 2.12.2 *Sola fide*

The second principle is *Sola Fide* (faith alone), which according to Deist (1990), means that: "Salvation is to be found only by faith in Jesus Christ." It means that no one has the right to claim that they can attain salvation through their own merits. Hoeksema (1971) writes in an attempt to explain the principle: "Not that I am acceptable to God, on account of the worthiness of my faith but because only the satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ, is my righteousness before God; and that I cannot receive and apply the same to myself any other way than by faith in Christ only". What this means is quite clearly that even the faith through which one attains salvation is a gift from God in Christ Jesus and is appropriated through the mediation of the Holy Spirit, who is working through the Gospel. All honour is therefore due to God, who of his own free will redeems the sinners on account of Christ's obedience and sacrifice on the cross of Calvary. Faith in Christ Jesus and not one's good works is important for appropriation of salvation. It is for this reason that Reformed theology and ministry focuses on raising, preserving, strengthening, deepening and making faith contextually fruitful (Abbing, 1964). It is surprising that the RCSA has not, on the basis of the *Sola Fide* principle, employed the Christian healing ministry to develop, preserve, strengthen, deepen and make faith contextually fruitful. The healing ministry can to my mind strongly facilitate people's conversion to faith in Christ and their maturation in faith. The question is: Why has the RCSA shunned this ministry that has so much potential for successful mission work and pastoral care,

especially in Africa? It is clear here as well that the principle of *Sola Fide* has nothing against the articulation and practice of the healing ministry. I now turn to another important principle of the Reformation, namely the principle of *Sola Gratia*.

### **2.12.3 Sola Gratia**

The third Reformation principle is *Sola Gratia*. *Sola Gratia* clarifies, according to Deist (1990), the fact that, “The human being is saved not by any merit of his/her own, but only by the grace of God.” The question is whether the RCSA still believes in such wonderful grace through which God saves the world. Christ’s earthly ministry combined in a very imaginative way the preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom of God and caring for people. The purpose of Christ’s work was total salvation, that is, forgiveness of sin, cure and caring for people who are suffering towards the ultimate provision of wholeness. Salvation and giving care are closely related (Khathide, 1999). The combination of the proclamation of the gospel and healing in Christ’s ministry of caring is understandable. Their divorcee’s way to be cared for and counselled therefore has to be unblocked. Christ unblocked people’s way to liberation and salvation through caring and healing. A further question is: Does the church, especially the RCSA, still view herself as Christ’s earthly form of existence while she ignores Christ’s caring and counselling in the face of so much human suffering?

### **2.12.4 Sola Christus or Solo Christo**

The fourth principle that should play a role in pastoral care and counselling is *Sola Christus*, a Latin Reformed doctrinal term that means Christ alone or through Christ alone (Muller, 1985). Faith in Christ alone is important in helping divorcees through pastoral care and counselling. According to this description, the love of Christ and His hands only are of primary importance in the care for and counselling of believers. It implies that Christ alone is the hope and the future of church. Christ alone is the only hope of the RCSA. Christ’s redemptive service encompasses both the healing Word and the healing action to liberate divorcees who are in misery and distress.

### **2.12.5 Soli Deo Gloria.**

The fifth principle that is one of the Reformed doctrinal terms that plays a role in pastoral care and counselling is *Soli Deo Gloria*. *Soli Deo Gloria* means, “To God be the Glory.” According to Adams

(1976), the goal of all Christian activity is the glory of God. Visitation to provide pastoral care and counselling to divorcees must glorify God. Glorifying God means two things: Firstly giving Him the glory among those who do not know Him, and secondly glorifying God by doing those things that please Him. That is to say, He is glorified by obedience to His will as it is revealed in the Holy Scriptures. A pastor may glorify God in the visitation of a divorcee who is a member of God's flock. The pastor can glorify God with adequate care that demonstrates the love of Christ to the divorced members. He can glorify God through pastoral care that pleases God. According to the above-mentioned explanation, the primary importance of the RCSA is only to glorify God. It implies that in the church life and its pastoral care and counselling ministry for church members, only the Triune God "*God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit,*" will be given glory according to the way God revealed Himself in the message of the Bible.

### **2.13 Reformed Understanding of Pastoral Care and Counselling to Divorcees**

According to Manala (2009), a few things are central to the Reformed understanding of pastoral care and counselling to divorcees. Pastoral care and counselling is understood to deal with the individual who is under tremendous stress because of intense pain, isolation and suffering resulting from the divorce. This care entails the expression of the good news to the divorcee in his or her unique situation. It should be understood from the existential position of their hurt. The primary goal is faith-help. The emphasis is on supporting divorcees to cope with painful challenges so that their faith will be strengthened. There should be great emphasis on the loving care to the divorcee in the church contexts. The church is called to provide emotional and spiritual support to the divorcee. Divorcees expect the church to provide pastoral care and counselling as presented in the gospels, which includes more than mere spiritual support.

Pastoral care and counselling involves the preaching of the good news of the Kingdom of God, teaching, healing and prayer (Ferguson & Wright, 1988). In the RCSA, Jesus Christ himself connects pastoral care and counselling. The caring mission is viewed as an act of obedience. Van Wyk (2006) quotes the following Scriptural passages: Mark 6:12; 16:15-18 and Luke 10:9 and 34. He (Van Wyk, 2006) realizes a great need for this caring ministry in the RCSA where very few members use a Western system of care and counselling. He sees the proposed ministry in light of Jesus' caring ministry, which accepted people because of the fall of humankind into sin and broken social

relationships. The church has the Biblical aspect of pastoral care and counselling. "Come to me, all you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest" (Matt 11:28). These are powerful words that can comfort, show respect for and assist the divorcee. These kinds of words cannot only comfort and strengthen, but also help the divorcee to move on with a life after divorce. The responsibility of the church to support divorcees is huge. The church is a place for anyone in need. Therefore, it should be a safe atmosphere where divorcees can share their challenges and not be rejected, where their challenges can be solved. It is difficult for the church to turn a blind eye to the challenges of divorcees because divorcees are members of the church of Christ. Therefore, the church needs to condemn the rejection of divorcees.

Churches should organize workshops, conferences and training programmes to inform church members. If the church wants to be a church for the people, it must also accommodate divorcees and to create an environment where divorcees feel safe and comfortable. The church should be a place where divorcees feel free to worship and practise their faith in God. Therefore, the church should be the voice of the divorcees who are experiencing challenges. The church should allow them to be part of leadership and to hold decision-making positions in the church. The church is a place for anyone in need. It can be a shelter for divorcees where they can feel free to worship their God. Through pastoral care and counselling, the spirit of the divorcees can be healed in the church. Many divorcees are physically, emotionally, psychologically, and socially damaged. Divorce damages their dignity. It leaves emotional and psychological scars.

#### **2.14 The Caring and Counselling Practices of the Church**

The church has a caring and counselling ministry as its calling. Many gospel accounts reveal the deeper-lying concern of Jesus Christ for the people. Van der Poel (1999) states the result of this concern quite well: "Healing of illnesses of any kind was a significant part of his ministry." He states further that this caring later became the concern of the church: "The Acts of the Apostles show that the same concern was passed on to the early Christian communities." It means that Jesus gave his later followers, part of whom is the contemporary church, a caring commission. The church therefore became Christ's earthly representative in the post-ascension period. Barclay's (1975) statement about the mission that Christ left for his church as recorded in Mark 16 is quite informative and important. What is clear from his interpretation is that the church has a preaching and a healing

commission that is carried out in the sphere of God's dynamic power. Barclay (1975) presents the following interpretation of Christ's commission to the church:

- The Church has a preaching task. It is the duty of the Church and of every Christian to tell the good news of Jesus to those who have never heard it.
- The Church has a caring task. Christianity is concerned with men's bodies and men's minds. Jesus wished to bring care to the body and to the soul.
- The Church is a Church of power. We need not take everything literally. We need not think that the Christian is literally to have the power to lift venomous snakes and drink poisonous liquids and take no harm. Behind this picturesque language, there is the conviction that the Christian is filled with a power to cope with life and deal with life that others do not and cannot possess.
- The Church would never be left alone to do its work. Always Christ works with it and in it and through it. The Lord of the Church is still in the Church and he is still the Lord of power. This means that the contemporary Christian's life is still lived in the presence and power of Him who was crucified and rose again on the third day. The pastoral care and counselling practices in Africa should emphasize God's omnipotence, especially in respect of supporting divorcees and assurance of the fullness of life and well-being here and now.

### **2.15 The Afro-Sensed Pastoral Care and Counselling**

The term "*Afro-sense*" is related with the term "*Afro-Christian*." The Afro-Christian framework represents a framework where biblical and African social values meet offer a context within which the Christian ministry of support to the divorcees in Africa may function effectively. The term has been in use for some time now and should provide a broader and clearer picture of the methodology of African Christianity and African Christian ministry (Manala, 2009). Pastoral care and counselling in Africa should be approached and understood from an African-Christian perspective. Seoka's (1997) indicates that the subject "Christianity and culture" should be approached from the context of culture if it is to make sense. Such an approach should emphasize the culture of the people whom the Gospel and Christianity reaches, making culture the primary factor in the method of providing African pastoral care and counselling. An African cultural experiences and practices for the Christian ministry to the divorcees in Africa will not only make a lot of sense but more importantly, but it will

also improve the quality of people's lives. The concept Afro-sensed suggests that the Christian ministry in Africa should be genuinely African and Christian. There is potential for a caring and counselling in the Christian ministry that is constructed on the foundation of African cultural experiences and practices and biblical theology. The biblical story about the life and work of the early Christian church as narrated in Acts 2:43-47 reveals a lifestyle that is characterized by close kinship, mutuality, selflessness, self-sacrifice for the sake of the other and prayerfulness. This lifestyle and values of the Christian community are closely related to the African *Ubuntu* lifestyle.

Four important pillars, namely community (*koinonia*), mutuality, self-sacrifice for the sake of the other and the belief in God's healing power can be observed in both these communities (Uka, 1994). African people are known for their love of and concrete commitment to community. It is indeed a mutual community (Shorter, 1978). This mutual community lifestyle is the core of 'African-ness'. The same is true also for the Christian lifestyle in as far as it is founded on the culture of the ancient Mediterranean peoples and devoid of the influence of Western civilization with its naturalism and individualism. The *Ubuntu* lifestyle relates well to the worldview of the ancient Mediterranean culture, which is the predominant context of biblical narratives. In his comparative study of the social values of the ancient Mediterranean world and those of Africa in today's context.

Botha (1997) states: "There can be no doubt that what is true for the ancient Mediterranean culture in terms of values and human relationships is also true for Africa: it is group-centred and the spirit of *Ubuntu* is all-pervasive". Group belonging, interdependence and communal life are therefore at the heart of Africanness just as they are at the heart of the ancient Mediterranean worldview.

Africans' encounter with the Gospel in its Mediterranean culture should, to my mind, advance a meaningful loving service to the Africans, including people living with the stigma of divorce. The mutual support or solidarity is at the core of African life. African peoples "acted always to fulfil a human need, their own and that of others" (Shorter, 1978). Community members cooperate in support of the weaker members in particular, for example the elderly, the orphans and the handicapped. "The demands of hospitality," notes Shorter (1978), "were far-reaching, extending not only to the whole family community, but also to clan, chiefdom and on occasion, the whole ethnic or language group."

Kaunda (1978) states: “The African traditional community was a mutual society, an accepting society, and an inclusive society.” Kaunda (1978) sees these features of the traditional African community as a core system of African life. The African community is organized around addressing and satisfying of the basic human needs of all its members. The organizing motto for African communities was and still is, “an injury to one is an injury to all” in Tshivenda, “*U vhai sala ha muthihi ndi u vhai sala ha vhothe*”.

This sense of African solidarity comes powerfully to the fore in practical ways. Any act in solidarity with one’s neighbour is life giving to both the recipient and the giver. It is healing to both participants in the act. Another characteristic that the African community shares with the Christian community is their belief in the God of love and in mutual love. African people therefore found their lives and conduct on their religious faith.

Shorter (1978) cites Leopold Sédar Senghor, former president of Senegal, as follows: “The African is a believer in God, and for him a Godless society is a loveless society.” Love, which is God’s primary attribute and which is often used as the identity of God (e.g. the words “*God is Love*” are found on many churches’ pulpit cloths), lies at the centre of African life. Love is therefore as Senghor (1978) puts it, the essential energy. Senghor believes that human life – even wellbeing and achievements – would be of no use if it does not lead to a love-union (Shorter, 1978). Love is therefore essentially the primary motif and the driving force of African community life. The result of this is a strong sense of brotherhood and sisterhood, as well as meaningful relationships and communication. This should stand the Christian ministry in good stead when it comes to the ministry to the divorcee in Africa. God is calling the RCSA in the Vhembe district to practice the spirit of *Ubuntu*. Of course, one should be aware of the limitations of the African context. However, Africans may well respond more positively to an approach that considers this context. There are some challenges that have to be resolved to facilitate the smooth practice of the church’s Afro-sensed pastoral care and counselling.

In order for the Afro-sensed model of pastoral care and counselling ministry to the divorcees in Africa to function effectively, it should, as Ackermann (1993) states, embody the ethical demands of the reign of God, namely justice, love, freedom and *shalom* (peace). Divorcees must be given respect and honour within the church in Africa. Only then will the Afro-sensed model of pastoral

care and counselling to the divorcees be acceptable. It entails that they are supported through home visits, coming together with them in intercessions, prayers and Bible studies for caring. It is indeed within an Afro-sensed pastoral context that the caring ministry can take place as a manifestation of God's power over evil, as compassion and as love and sympathy (Uka, 1994) and as a means of survival. Mbigi and Maree (1995) use a five-finger theory to highlight the values of *Ubuntu*. The five underlying development principles that are represented by the five fingers are respect, dignity, solidarity, compassion and survival.

### **2.16 The African View of Divorce**

Africans view of divorce is a very negative and life-denying phenomenon because it is the direct opposite of African marriages, which is associated with life itself. This section explores divorce as viewed by Africans. This reflection intends to point to divorce as one of major enemies of human life (Mbiti, 1991; Moila, 2002). Divorcees are often overwhelmed by the trauma of divorce. What they have experienced can stay in their memories for years.

African care and counselling in African societies, in spite of the spirit of *Ubuntu* philosophy, are destroying divorcees, especially females. Phiri (2002), citing Musimbi Kanyoro, states: "Culture has silenced many women in Africa and made us unable to experience the liberating promises of God. Favourable aspects of our cultures, which enhance the well-being of women, have been suppressed." In the Vhembe District, the Vhavenda women who have returned from their marriages get the nickname "*Mbuyavhuhadzi*," that is, a divorced woman who is once more treated as a child in her own family, and a divorced woman who is forced to go back to her parents' family (Phaswana, 2000). Comments and practices that diminish women are still practised to various degrees in our societies, often making women objects of cultural preservation. The above labelling of female divorcees reveals one of the obstacles to the successful practice of the African church's pastoral care and counselling ministry. There is gender inequality, insensitivity and abuse of women.

Women and men who are divorced must feel accepted and respected in order for them to make a meaningful contribution. It will be quite difficult for them to make any kind of contribution if churches fail to provide them with pastoral care and counselling. Therefore, the divorcees urgently need pastoral care and counselling to overcome their grief and to sort out their feelings about the

divorce itself. In this process, divorcees experience a variety of confused feelings, such as denial, saying, "It should not have happened to me." They feel helpless since they have lost control over their lives as it was before, because the divorce has changed their outlook. They start blaming themselves and become angry about what has happened, asking "Why?" They feel shame and humiliation and are angry with their partners who caused the divorce and some are unsympathetic towards their ex-partner.

Most of the divorcees experience shame at being divorced, believing that others will think less of them. This pain of emotional shock overwhelms their thoughts (Katz, 1979). Emotionally they are affected so deeply that they cannot cope with their feelings. Some of the divorcees recover and are able to talk about their experiences openly. It is very difficult for the divorcees to forget about everything easily and to go on with their lives. They need pastoral care and counselling to cope. The best thing for the divorcee is to talk about their feelings as the experience relates to the rest of their lives and their challenges. This requires pastoral care and counselling support. The important thing is that the divorcees should find support to cope with their feelings, challenges and attitudes, and to find alternative ways of coping with their life after divorce (Medea & Thompson 1974). Getting pastoral care and counselling is better than being overwhelmed by challenges. After divorce, a divorcee can still change his or her life and take control of his or her life again. This will help such a person to form positive attitudes about life again (Keyser & Purdon, 1995).

### **2.17 Conclusion**

This chapter reviewed the available literature on pastoral care and counselling that has to answer the needs of people in stressful situations in life. All the authors emphasize the need for pastoral care and counselling. In order for pastoral care and counselling to meet the needs of the people who need it, the cultural concerns and the worldview of the people concerned should be considered. Divorcees should not be left alone, but should feel comforted and cared for by the churches to which they belong. If this happens, they will be healed emotionally and supported by the pastors during their difficult ordeal, and they will not see being divorced as the end of life, but as part of life where they can be healed by God. Pastors should know that they couldn't heal a divorcee without having Jesus in mind, and that God entrusted the message of healing through pastoral care and counselling to divorcees who are experiencing challenges for them to see that in all their pain and suffering, they

are not alone; God who is their Great Shepherd is always with them. Their Good Shepherd made a promise to comfort them “I will be with you always until the end of the earth.” The literature discussed above help us to describe pastoral care and counselling aimed at the challenges of divorcees. It is relevant for the emotional healing of the victims of divorce in the RCSA in the Vhembe District of Limpopo. The following chapter discusses the research methodology used in this study.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

The focus of the previous chapter was on reviewing the available body of literature. The investigation focused on the challenges that divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District have to face and moved towards an Afro-sensed model of pastoral care and counselling. In this chapter, the study focuses on the method that was used to collect data and how that data were captured and analysed. The area under study is described to provide the reader with a clear understanding of the study. This chapter also provides a description of research design and methodology that was used by the researcher to answer the research questions of this study to achieve its objectives. This chapter describes the procedures followed for conducting the research study. It also explains the way in which the sample population was drawn, how interviews were conducted and recorded. The main objective of this study was to gain insight into divorcee's feelings and perceptions about their experiences and their challenges with regard to pastoral care and counselling. The aim of the study was to investigate the challenges of divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District and to develop a model of pastoral care and counselling to support divorcees to cope with their challenges.

The study paid attention to the spiritual, emotional, and psychosocial challenges of this population and the support that they receive to help them overcome these challenges. The study is open to all divorcees of the RCSAVD who are divorced. This research used a qualitative method (the collection of first-hand information through interviews) to examine the real life experiences of the divorcees. The qualitative approach simply means a description of the behaviour of people in a particular society (White, 2005). A qualitative approach was selected because it focuses on the reality of what is happening. By using this approach, the researcher gained in-depth information about the investigation of the challenges of divorcees regarding pastoral care and counselling and gained a richer understanding of divorcee's experiences. With the permission of the School of Human and Social Sciences at the University of Venda, the University Higher Degrees Committee, and the University Research Ethics Committee and the Church Councils of the RCSA in the Vhembe District, the researcher conducted fieldwork in the sampled churches where the primary target was divorcees. Pastors also played a major role by helping the researcher to visit the participants for

interview purposes. According to White (2005), the interview is the most efficient and convenient instrument that can be used to collect data, particularly when one is researching a human response. According to Tuckman (1991), interviews “provide access to what is inside a person’s head, make it possible to measure what a person knows, (*knowledge or information*), what a person likes or dislikes (*values and preferences*), and what a person thinks (*attitudes and beliefs*)”. This research was conducted among the divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District. In his observations, the researcher focused on the behaviour (attitudes) of divorcees who are church members. The cooperation was excellent. In order to achieve this objective, the researcher used face-to-face interviews as an instrument to collect data. Thirty divorcees from the RCSAVD were interviewed with an interview guide. The questions sought to probe the challenges of divorcees regarding pastoral care and counselling.

### **3.2 Research design**

According to Tripodi (1985), research designs are plans, structures and strategies of investigation that seek to obtain answers to various questions. Uys and Bassoom (1998) define the research design as the structural framework or blueprint of the study. Research design can also be understood as a set of logical steps taken by a researcher to answer the questions of the study. It forms a blue print pattern of the study and determines the methods used by the researcher to obtain subjects, collect data, analyse the data and interpret the results (Brink, 1996). According to Creswell (2012), research design is a procedure for collecting, analysing and reporting research in qualitative research. The unstructured interviews gave divorcees the opportunity to talk openly about their personal experiences and to create meaning of those experiences. The unstructured interviews produced rich data as participants committed themselves to disclose sensitive information. The unstructured interviews enabled sufficient flexibility for the researcher to explore participants’ responses in depth.

The information was obtained from participants by computer recording and note taking. The researcher used an interview guide to conduct face-to-face interviews with divorcees to explore their challenges regarding pastoral care and counselling. In addition, the main research question guided the interviews. The interviewer encouraged the participant to continue talking by using techniques such as nodding the head or making a sound that indicates interest. The participants were interviewed in their respective homes. The language that the researcher used during interview is Tshivenda and

there was no need for interpreting. In this manner, the researcher collected information about the challenges from divorcees who are members of the RCSA in the Vhembe District. By investigating the challenges of divorcees, the study intends to bring pastoral care and counselling support to the life and challenges of divorcees. The researcher investigated the challenges of divorcees specifically within an African context. Wikipedia (2006) indicated that in the social sciences, qualitative method is a broad term that describes research that focuses on how individual and groups view and understand the world and construct meaning from their experiences. It is essentially narrative-oriented and explores one key concept. It enables the researcher to explore challenges as they real people perceive and define them. It allows people to speak for themselves. A qualitative, descriptive, explorative and contextual design was used to explore the views of divorcees.

### **3.2.1 Qualitative research design**

This study was conducted using a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach is used when researchers want to develop a rich understanding of a phenomenon as it exists in the real world and as the individuals within that context construct their world (Polit & Beck, 2006). Qualitative research is a systemic, subjective approach that allows participants to describe their real life experiences, while the researcher attaches meanings to the described phenomena.

Qualitative research enables the researcher to explore experiences as real people perceive and define them. It allows people to speak for themselves, thereby emphasizing the human capacity to know. The researcher seeks to reveal human real life experiences. The focus in the qualitative design is in understanding the whole by giving meaning to experiences such as emotions that are content with human philosophy (Burns & Grove, 2005). According to Klopper (2013), qualitative research is an inquiry approach in which the inquirer explores a central phenomenon, asks participants broad, general questions and collects detailed views of participants in the form of words or images.

Through qualitative approach, the researcher was able to obtain data using individual interviews with the divorcees of the RCSA in the Vhembe District of Limpopo. The researcher decided to use the qualitative approach to get a better understanding of the feelings and experiences of divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District of Limpopo with the aim of exploring and describing the challenges of pastoral care and counselling that the participants experience.

### **3.2.2 Exploratory research design**

The study explores the challenges of divorcees with an explorative design. The purpose of the exploration is to gain a richer understanding of the research problem. The study explored the challenges faced by divorcees regarding pastoral care and counselling in the RCSA in the Vhembe District of Limpopo. The researcher wished to gain new insights and to understand the meaning of qualitative results.

### **3.2.3 Descriptive research design**

The descriptive part of the research design means that the study describes the challenges of divorcees. A descriptive design was selected because there are elements in life that are best described in words rather than in numbers. Descriptive in this study refers to the experiential meaning of the lived experiences of the divorcees and their challenges regarding pastoral care and counselling. The descriptive approach was appropriate because an accurate and authentic description of the challenges divorcees is required for the success of pastoral care and counselling in the RCSA in the Vhembe District.

### **3.2.4 Contextual research design**

Burn and Grove (2003) indicate that the system of collecting data for a research project is known as research methodology. Research methodology refers to ways of obtaining, organizing and analysing data (Burn & Grove, 2003). In this study, a qualitative methodology was used to answer the research question. This study focused on divorcees, and the researcher made sure that the qualitative methodology be used as it looks into the experiences of divorcees in their daily lives. The focus of this study was to investigate the challenges of divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District.

## **3.3 Research Setting**

The study was conducted within churches in the Vhembe district of Limpopo. The Vhembe district is one of the five districts of Limpopo in the Republic of South Africa. It is located in the most rural Northern part of Limpopo and shares borders Botswana, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Vhembe is a rural township area with a mainly Black population who speaks Tshivenda. There are also Whites and Indians, although Blacks are predominant. The district houses many people who have migrated

from all over the African continent, including people from Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Botswana, China, Mozambique etc. The district is presently made up of four local municipalities, including Mutale, Musina, Makhado, and Thulamela. It has a total population of 1 293 783 (Statistics SA, 2011). The area is administered by a mayor and councillors, but villages are ruled by local chiefs. The researcher purposefully chose the local Reformed congregations from the RCSA from two church clusters (Luvuvhu and Gateway) in the Vhembe District. The individual congregations included De hoop, Fundudzi, Mutale, Musina, Mutshundudi, Mutshedzi, Mvudi, Niani, Nzhelele, Tshitandani and Vhumbedzi. The map below indicates the approximate area where these congregations are located.

*Figure 1*            The location of Vhembe District in South Africa Source: ESRI 2010; Statistics South Africa 2003

### **3.4 Population**

A population is a collection of objects, events or individuals with some common characteristics that the researcher is interested in studying (Mouton, 1998). The population refers to the entire set of people who forms the focus of the research and about whom the researcher wants to determine some characteristics (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995). Creswell (2012) defines population as a group of individuals who have the same characteristics. For example, all divorcees would make up the population of divorcees, and all church pastors in a church would make up the population of pastors.

Creswell (2012) defines a sample as a subgroup of the target population that the researcher plans to study for the purpose of generalizing about the target population. The target population comprised all divorcees from the RCSA in the Vhembe District. The sample included all the accessible divorcees from the RCSA in the Vhembe District. With regard to gender distribution, both male and female divorcees were interviewed. The total number of participants interviewed was 30. The participants came from the RCSA from two local municipalities (Thulamela and Makhado) because there are many RCSA congregations in this area of the Vhembe District of Limpopo. To investigate the reality of the study, the researcher interacted with the church population in the eleven RCSA congregations in the Vhembe District. The participants came from all eleven RCSA congregations in Vhembe District.

### **3.5 Sampling**

According to White (2005), sampling is defined as the process of selecting a sample from the population to obtain information regarding a phenomenon in a way that represents the entire population.

Purposive sampling is a qualitative sampling procedure in which researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). Purposive sample is based on the researcher's judgment on the suitability of the person. This kind of sampling was used for this study. All 30 participants were drawn from the Vhembe District population and they were divorcees (Mitchell, 1985). Sampling is also a systematic way of choosing a group small enough to study and large enough to be representative.

The main aim of the interview was to investigate the challenges of divorcees regarding pastoral care and counselling in the RCSA in the Vhembe District. The researcher identified the research participants with the help of RCSA pastors from the following RCSA or congregations in the Vhembe District: Mutshundudi, Mutale, Mvudi, Tshitandani, Vhumbedzi, De hoop, Nzhelele, and Niani. The sampling included the following congregations: Thirteen congregations based at Mutshundudi Reformed Church in the Tshivhasa area, nine church branches based at Mvudi Reformed Church in the Thohoyandou area, six church branches around Sibasa and Makwarela at

the Mutale Reformed Church, eleven church branches at De Hoop Reformed Church in the Vuwani area and eight church branches at Tshitandani and Nzhelele in the Makhado area.

In order to get the divorcees to grant interviews, the researcher made appointments with the participants in their respective homes. This was purposive sampling. The researcher visited the divorcees in their respective homes and had an interview with them. The researcher interviewed divorcees who were willing to make a contribution to this study.

Thirty participants were selected via purposive sampling by evaluating information. This allowed the researcher to identify those divorcees between the ages of 25 and 65 years, both male and female who indicated a willingness to participate in this research study. After identifying possible participants, letters were sent to them explaining the aim of the study and interested divorcees returned a signed consent form. Only thirty divorcees returned their signed consent forms. The interviews were conducted in the homes of divorcees for the researcher to see the challenges that the divorcees are facing. It was not possible to use the whole population of the study in the RCSA in the Vhembe District, but the sample that was selected was representative of the feelings of the divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District. De Vos (1998) states that most of the time researchers are not able to study an entire population owing to limitations of time and costs, and they are subsequently obliged to draw a sample.

### **3.5.1 Sampling of churches**

Reformed churches from two church clusters (Luvuvhu and Gateway) within the Thulamela and Makhado municipalities in the Vhembe District were purposively sampled for the study. The reason for sampling churches from these boundaries is that they are the ones with more church branches of the RCSA in the Vhembe District.

### **3.5.2 Sampling of participants**

Non-probability purposive sampling was used to select the divorcees (both male and females) from the RCSA in the Vhembe District from two local municipalities.

### 3.5.3 Sampling size

A sample is a representative group or a portion of population (Chimedza, 2003). According to Mulwa (2006), the sample size usually depends on the population size. The smaller the population, the bigger the percentage for sampling and vice versa. In the case of this research, the targeted group was all divorcees who were experiencing challenges regarding pastoral care and counselling in the RCSA in Vhembe.

In a qualitative study, the sampling size is not determined in advance, however, the minimum requirement for qualitative research were adhered to, namely data saturation. The qualitative research tends to use smaller samples rather than quantitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

According to Mulwa (2006), limiting a sample based on data saturation avoids repeating much of the generated information and gives balanced and constant data required by the study. The participants came from all eleven Reformed churches in the Vhembe District.

In this study, the researcher anticipated that one hundred divorcees could potentially participate in this study, although the number would be determined by data saturation. The researcher interviewed 30 divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District. The population of the study consisted of both males and females participants, the division being 15 males and 35 females.

*Inclusion Criteria:* The inclusion criteria were that participants had to be divorcees from the RCSA in the Vhembe District where pastoral care and counselling should be practised, should be divorced for at least three years, and able to provide voluntary informed consent.

*Exclusion Criteria:* Participants were excluded from the study if they were not able to provide informed consent, or had been divorced for less than three years.

### 3.6 Research Instrument

Interviews were used as the instrument for data collection (Creswell 2009). In this study, the researcher designed an unstructured interview guide for collecting data from the divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District. The researcher used a face-to-face interview to collect true information about the challenges that divorcee's encounter that should be answered by pastoral care

and counselling in the RCSA in the Vhembe District. The data served to furnish the researcher with information on how different Reformed churches in the Vhembe District treat divorcees. The interview was pre-tested to check if the questions are clear and logical. The research instrument was edited by the supervisor and other experts in research.

Research questions were organized by the researcher to collect information from the divorcees. The researcher asked one main research question on the challenges that divorcees face. The participants were required to answer the question in a descriptive or narrative way. The instrument was designed to encourage divorcees to express their own view. A computer recording was used to capture the information. Mulwa (2006) would argue that unstructured interview is one in which the researcher knows the general direction to go, but he or she engages the interviewee in an informational and relaxed discussion. The researcher devoted two months to do field work.

### **3.7 Data Collection**

The data collection method is the method used to collect information to address a research problem. This is the phase where proper information for answering the research question is gathered. Before the interview begins, the researcher explains the nature of the research and the purpose of interview to the participants and answered any questions that he or she might have had. This included telling the participants how the data would be used. If the data are to be recorded, the participant's permission must be sought. The collection of data was done using unstructured interviews. The researcher used an interview schedule to conduct face-to-face interviews with divorcees to explore their challenges regarding pastoral care and counselling in the RCSA in the Vhembe District of Limpopo. A triangulation method was also used. The researcher used face-to-face interviews, observation, as well as field notes. Vhembe is occupied by Tshivenda-speaking dwellers, so the researcher was prepared to interpret interview questions from English into the native language. This was to facilitate easier communication so that the researcher could gather adequate information and the participants could understand the questions clearly. Thirty participants were interviewed in this study. Triangulation was done to seek deeper or fuller meaning from participants. The phenomenological approach was preferred to allow the interviewee to describe their life-world. In the current study, it was used to explore and describe the experiences of divorcees at the church. One

central question was asked, namely: “*What are your challenges as a divorcee regarding pastoral care and counselling in the RCSA in the Vhembe District of the Limpopo Province?*”

The researcher used the following communication techniques to encourage participants to talk freely and openly:

*Probing:* This is the process of requesting additional information. Interviewees were encouraged to talk during the interview with the interviewer making vague comments that could have multiple meanings (Kruger, 1994).

*Paraphrasing:* The interviewer repeats what the interviewee said in summary to indicate that he or she is following and understands what the interviewee is saying. Paraphrasing helps the interviewer to check his own perceptions to make sure that he really understands what the interviewee is describing.

*Summarizing:* This allows the interviewer to condense and to summarize the essence of the participant’s statement.

*Listening:* This is the process of tuning in carefully to the interviewee’s message and responding accurately to the meaning behind the messages. Listening enhances interviews, as the interviewees are encouraged to talk freely.

*Clarification:* This involves the interviewer’s response to make the interviewee’s verbalization clearer. The purpose of clarification is to highlight the meaning of comments if it is not clear initially.

The participants were interviewed at their homes. Divorcees were encouraged to talk freely about the challenges they are facing regarding pastoral care and counselling in the RCSA in the Vhembe District. The researcher made observation and took notes. Data were also recorded on a computer. It took the researcher two months to complete interviews. Each interview lasted sixty minutes. The interview guide was prepared in English and translated to Tshivenda so that the participants who are Tshivenda-speaking could clearly understand the subject and express their feelings freely. The data collected were translated from Tshivenda into English. The researcher used a computer voice recorder and notebook with the consent of the participants to capture the information from the participants and to ensure that all words spoken by the participants were recorded. Note taking and

voice recording are useful when they are used together because they provide a holistic analysis of the information and give details to specific interview (Fossey, 2002).

There were also challenges during data collection, although they were few. The researcher had to convince the participants that he had no secret agenda in interviewing them. This is because he could in certain cases detect some tension when he introduced his research topic to some participants. Secondly, he had to translate the research question to ensure maximum understanding. Some of the expressions do not mean the same thing in Tshivenda than in English. In certain cases, divorcees were very emotional. The recorded data obtained during interviews with participants were edited and explained to reach appropriate conclusions. Interpretations were explained to support existing data. Themes were reviewed to check whether they reflect the meanings of what the divorcees had said. The researcher showed the connections between the research findings and literature reviewed. The information is presented and visualized in Chapter 4.

### **3.8 Data Analysis**

The analysis of the data refers to using the data to answer the questions the research sets out to answer. Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. The study compared the information (data) and analysed it to find out whether divorcees receive the same treatment in the church. This enabled the researcher to find out whether the church offers adequate support to divorcees. The data collected provided enough evidence as to whether the research problem is valid. The computer-recorded data were transcribed. Reading and re-reading the daily field notes, as well as listening the computer recordings, made it possible for the researcher to make sense of what the divorcees had said. The qualitative data were analysed using Tesch's six steps of open coding (Creswell, 2012). The following steps were followed during data analysis:

*Step One:* The researcher organizes and prepares data. The data are sorted and arranged into different types.

*Step Two:* The researcher reads through all the transcripts carefully, writing notes in the margins to obtain a general sense of the transcripts.

*Step Three:* The researcher organizes the text data gathered during data collection into categories that are labelled based on the actual language of the participants. The researcher forms topics from the collected data and clusters of similar views.

*Step Four:* The researcher generates codes for the formulated topics. The coding of topics results in the generation of a small number of themes, which then appears as major findings.

*Step Five:* This step entails how the themes are represented in the narrative. It involves the detailed discussion of several themes, complete with subthemes, multiple perspectives from individuals and quotations.

*Step Six:* Involves interpreting the data.

The research findings were grouped together into themes that answer the different research questions to address the issue of supporting divorcees through pastoral care and counselling in the RCSA in the Vhembe District of Limpopo. The main reason for doing this is to see that the researcher is in line with conceptual framework of the study and the research questions that focused on the experiences of the divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District. This method of analysis allowed the researcher to construct and narrate the participants' reality of what they experienced in their challenges as divorcees and how they coped in their painful situation.

### **3.9 Measures to ensure trustworthiness**

The criteria used for establishing trustworthiness according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) were applied, including credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. They are discussed as follows:

*Credibility:* There was prolonged engagement with the study population to understand challenges faced by divorcees regarding pastoral care and counselling in the RCSA in the Vhembe District. Prolonged engagement is also important for building trust and rapport with participants. First, contact was made to obtain agreement and then to request consent from divorcees, followed by visits to conduct unstructured interviews. The researcher spent 45 to 50 minutes with the participants to build rapport, explaining the purpose of the study and all the ethical issues involved. This repeated contact enhanced credibility.

*Transferability:* A detailed report (thick description) of the findings of this study provides sufficient information to permit judgments about contextual similarity. Based on the integrity of this study, other settings may decide on the applicability of the findings to their settings. The use of purposive sampling of divorcees increases transferability. Data were collected until data saturation was reached.

*Dependability:* A computer recording was used to record participants' views and this was transcribed by the researcher and was checked against the field notes taken by the researcher. The research methodology was clearly and fully described.

*Conformability:* In this study, conformability is enhanced by the availability of raw data on a computer in the form of transcriptions to verify the themes. The use of bracketing prior to data collection ensures the pure description of data. All pre-conceived ideas regarding the challenges of divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District were put aside. Observations recorded in the researcher's handwritten notes are part of the audit trail and have been kept by the researcher.

The issue of trustworthiness ensures that there is validity and reliability of the research findings. The researcher applied ways described in literature to ensure trustworthiness.

### **3.10 Ethical Considerations**

Ethics are important in research because the subject of study is the learning and behaviour of human beings. Ethical measures were observed by the researcher throughout the whole research process to protect the right of the participants so that they are not embarrassed, feel hurt, frightened, imposed on, or otherwise negatively affected. Ethics is a system of moral values to ensure that the research procedures protect the rights of the study participants. A need for attention to ethical issues arose out of the inhumane treatment of participants in past years (Creswell, 2012). Research may not violate the rights and welfare of the participants. Ethics is that branch of philosophy that involves the study of right and wrong conduct. According to Bailey (1987), it is agreed that it is unethical for researchers to harm anyone in the course of research, especially if it is without the person's knowledge and permission. This includes deceiving participants about the true purpose of the study, asking questions that cause him or her embarrassment.

The research was conducted honestly. Wherever someone's quotations are used, reference was clearly indicated. The following ethical standards were upheld:

### **3.10.1 Physical or psychological harm**

Having gone through divorce automatically brings feelings of pain, uneasiness and anger. It is a process no one wishes to go through. In the event of unexpected discomfort and pain as a result of the questions posed to the participants, the researcher had referred the participants to fellow pastors who offer pastoral counselling, social workers and/or psychologists for further intervention. The researcher avoided causing physical or psychological harm to participants by carefully considering the phrasing of questions.

### **3.10.2 Permission**

Permission is the act of allowing somebody to do something and it is given by somebody in a position of authority. Permission to conduct research was sought from the school of Human and Social Sciences at the University of Venda, from the University Higher Degrees Committee (UHDC), and from the University Research Ethics (UREC). Permission was granted after the researcher had presented the research proposal to the school of Human and Social Sciences at the University of Venda. The UHDC gave approval based on the research proposal. Thereafter, the UREC issued an ethical clearance to conduct the research. In this study, permission to conduct research was also sought from the divorcees and their pastors. Finally, the researcher visited the participants to seek their consent before the research was conducted.

### **3.10.3 Voluntary participation**

Strydom (2002) indicates that research has to do with voluntary participation. The researcher informed the participants about the purpose of the study and that their participation was voluntarily and that they have the right to participate in the study freely and to withdraw from the study at any time without incurring any penalty. The participants were not forced to contribute and to take part in a study; it was out of their own volition. A person has the full right not to participate in the study. The researcher explained to the participants that they had a right to refuse participation in the research if they felt that they are no longer comfortable to continue with the research.

#### **3.10.4 Informed consent**

It is very important that the researcher inform the participants from the start that they will contribute in a research project. The researcher provided detailed information regarding the purpose and nature of the research to participants and those who agreed to take part in the study had to sign consent forms. After the researcher had explained to the participants the purpose of the study and their voluntary participation, all participants were requested to sign and return a consent form indicating their willingness to participate in the study. A consent letter was signed by the researcher and participants (see Appendix 2). The research participants were not forced to participate in this research, they participated out of their own free will. Participants were informed that this research was for educational purposes, with the sole purpose of supporting divorcees of the RCSA in the Vhembe District.

#### **3.10.5 Confidentiality**

The researcher maintained confidentiality at all times to protect the identity of participants. The information shared by participants was not shared with anybody else without permission. The participants were assured that the information was to be used for the purpose of the research only and the results of the research would be made available to them if they so wish. The participants were assured that no one would have access to the raw data of the study without authorization. No names of participants were mentioned in the study. The personal information that was collected during interview was not disclosed to any other person without the consent of the participant. Personal information refers to all aspects of a person's private life that are not openly disclosed or shared with the public, but are only known by a few friends and relatives. The researcher protected the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. The researcher informed all participants in the research that their identities would remain confidential. The researcher maintained the confidentiality of the respondents by not disclosing their names in this study. The confidentiality of the information given by the participants was kept in a locked room only known by and accessible to the researcher.

### **3.10.6 Privacy**

The researcher informed all participants that their identity was a matter of privacy. The private information of participants was not shared without the individual's knowledge or against his or her will. The researcher ensured that participants did not lose their dignity or friendship and did not feel embarrassed or ashamed as a result of taking part in the study. Any technical equipment like an audio recording or a research assistant that was used was explained to them. The participants were shown how to operate the recording device in case the information he or she wants to give should not to be recorded and he or she wants to stop it. In this study, the participants' right to privacy was not undermined throughout the research process because the researcher interviewed each participant as an individual in a private place. Conducting the interview in a private place helped the participants to open up and discuss their feelings without fear of being judged by others. Participants were linked to their names using an alias.

### **3.10.7 Respect**

According to MacArthur (Biblical Counselling, 1994), respect is very important in a counselling session. A counsellor should respect their clients and they should value them as persons of worth and with dignity. Participants to be interviewed were respected and they were informed that this research is done for educational purposes with the sole purpose of empowering divorcees who are experiencing challenges in the RCSA in the Vhembe District, Limpopo. They were respected irrespective of their age, gender, work place and academic qualification.

### **3.10.8 Deception**

The researcher refrained from raising false hopes in the participants about the potential effects of the research outcome.

### **3.10.9 Fidelity**

The researcher remained faithful to commitments such as keeping time, maintaining confidentiality and demonstrating empathy.

### **3.10.10 Dealing with the emotions of participants**

In some situations where the qualitative approach is used problems can arise, for example, participants may suffer harm on completion of the research. The challenge of being a divorcee is a touching and sensitive matter and in the process of the interview the researcher at times evoked some painful emotions in the divorcees. When the researcher realized that the participants were failing to deal with open wounds of grief, the researcher stopped and asked the participants if he or she wanted to continue with the interview or not. The researcher also helped the participants who were struggling with their pain with brief counselling so that they can cope with the open wounds of divorce. The researcher encouraged them to look to God, who cures and cares for souls.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the researcher presented the research design and methodology used to collect data, gave a clear view of the sampling strategy, the research instrument, the procedure followed to gather information, data analysis and how research ethics was applied. The qualitative research method was used to collect data from the divorcees of the RCSA in the Vhembe District. The collected data were analysed using the six steps proposed by Tesch's to understand how participants understand their personal experiences as divorcees who are experiencing challenges in the RCSA in the Vhembe District. Sampling and the composition of the focus population group and interview procedure were also highlighted. Ethical considerations such as confidentiality, the protection of participants' identification, consent letters, permission to be interviewed and safe filing of data were applicable to this study. Measures to ensure trustworthiness were considered to protect the rights of the participants. The next chapter presents the research findings and interpretation.

## CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings and interpretation of data collected as guided by the research question to address the challenges of divorcees regarding pastoral care and counselling to the divorcees of the RCSA in the Vhembe District of Limpopo. The main research question that was identified in Chapter 1 is: *“What are the challenges of divorcees regarding pastoral care and counselling in the RCSA in the Vhembe District of the Limpopo Province?”* Data were collected during fieldwork from the sampled population group of divorcees. The findings reflect the investigation of the challenges of divorcees that are not answered by pastoral care and counselling support. The data collected were used to investigate the challenges of divorcees with regard to the way they are treated in the RCSA. The research deals mainly with the challenges of divorcees to see if divorcees get support from the church through care and counselling.

This research was conducted among the Reformed churches in the Vhembe District. Interviews were organized and the sampled population group were interviewed. The researcher observed some common and similar answers from the different meetings. Many divorcees were very excited about the project and mentioned that it will be a revelation for the church to focus more on the challenges that the divorcees are facing and the way they are rejected in the church. The researcher gathered information about what divorcees experienced and feel about poor support from the church.

The advantage of face-to-face interviews is that the researcher was in a position to approach the affected participants regarding divorcee’s challenges. Since the researcher is an ordained pastor, he is used to talking with different people about sensitive topics or discussing problems. He was capable of handling the interviews. Permission was sought from all participants before the interview was conducted. The purpose of the study was explained to divorcees and confidentiality was guaranteed. A computer recorder was used to record the interview to assist the researcher to collect all the information from the participants. Recordings were transcribed from the Tshivenda interviews. Questions were translated into Tshivenda beforehand so that the participants could comfortable during the interviews. The findings are categorized under the themes: The findings and interpretations of the challenges of divorcees, and the sub-theme of the challenges of divorcees.

## 4.2 Profile of participants

Real names are not used in the profile of the participants to keep the identity of participants secret. Thirty divorcees were interviewed from different Reformed churches in the Vhembe District.

Table 2:

Profile of participants

<b>Name</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Language</b>
Participant number 1	African	56	Male	Teacher	Tshivenda
Participant number 2	African	50	Male	Teacher	Tshivenda
Participant number 3	African	52	Female	Manager	Tshivenda
Participant number 4	African	47	Male	Teacher	Xitsonga
Participant number 5	African	54	Female	Teacher	Tshivenda
Participant number 6	African	45	Female	Teacher	Tshivenda
Participant number 7	African	49	Female	Unemployed	Tshivenda
Participant number 8	African	35	Female	Unemployed	Tshivenda
Participant number 9	African	54	Female	Domestic worker	Tshivenda
Participant number 10	African	60	Female	Clerk	Tshivenda
Participant number 11	African	52	Male	Lecturer	Tshivenda
Participant number 12	African	29	Female	Secretary	Tshivenda
Participant number 13	African	51	Female	Teacher	Tshivenda
Participant number 14	African	52	Female	Teacher	Tshivenda
Participant number 15	African	30	Female	Secretary	Tshivenda
Participant number 16	African	49	Male	Lecturer	Tshivenda
Participant number 17	African	47	Male	Teacher	Tshivenda
Participant number 18	African	52	Female	Unemployed	Tshivenda
Participant number 19	African	47	Female	Teacher	Tshivenda

Participant number 20	African	48	Female	Nurse	Tshivenda
Participant number 21	African	59	Male	Policeman	Tshivenda
Participant number 22	African	45	Male	Lecturer	Tshivenda
Participant number 23	African	61	Male	Manager	Tshivenda
Participant number 24	African	52	Male	Pastor	Tshivenda
Participant number 25	African	42	Female	Unemployed	Tshivenda
Participant number 26	African	49	Female	Teacher	Tshivenda
Participant number 27	African	53	Female	Home-based carer	Tshivenda
Participant number 28	African	47	Female	Civil servant	Tshivenda
Participant number 29	African	48	Female	Private sector	Tshivenda
Participant number 30	African	39	Female	Teacher	Tshivenda

### 4.3 Themes and Sub-Themes that Emerged from Research Findings

According to the Merriam Webster Unabridged Dictionary (2015), themes are defined as the main subjects or ideas that are being discussed or described in a piece of writing. In this study, themes were identified by compiling the experiences of participants. Themes that came from interviews are put together to form a picture of collective experience. The identified themes include the following: (1) Physical challenges, (2) psychological challenges, (3) emotional challenges, (4) spiritual challenges, (5) sexual challenges, (6) children's challenges, (7) domestic challenges, (8) social challenges, (9) socio-economic pressures challenges, (10) legal challenges, and (11) remarriage challenges.

#### 4.4 Physical challenges

##### 4.4.1 The challenge of health

According to American Psychological Association (2016), counselling psychologists help people with physical, emotional and mental health issues to improve their sense of well-being, alleviate feelings of distress and resolve crises. During the interview, participant number 1 stated that,

*“I was divorced by my husband, after divorce, I experienced a health problem. I had physical problems; I experienced some bodily changes, I had sickness that affects the proper function of my body. I also experience a serious headache and I was admitted at hospital for treatment.”*

This was also confirmed by participant number 3, who told the researcher that,

*“I had a tension of headache that was caused by divorce.”*

Participant number 27 mentioned that,

*“...the pain of being divorced had a serious impact in my life to extent that I was later diagnosed with blood pressure. When I visited private clinic after being divorced, the nurse told me that my blood pressure is high.*

Another participant expressed it in this way

*“After my wife divorced me, I was admitted at MediClinic to receive psychological treatment because it was very difficult for me to accept divorce after 15 years of a marriage life.”*

Another participant expressed that,

*“...my divorce situation around my life went to the frying pan in the fire when divorce tragedy attacked me directly. In the heat of all this pain of losing a marriage partner through divorce, I was comforted by the faith that I was still hold to God.”*

Participant number 30 put things in this way:

*“Divorce damaged me a lot, it damaged my health. I had stress, I was healed by neurologist, and psychologist, I was unable to sleep.”*

According to Craig (1983), many divorcees’ physical and mental health deteriorates after divorce. Craig (1983) indicates that many divorced people are admitted to mental hospitals.

Hendrickson and Fitzpatrick (2006) state that some divorcees, after the pain of divorce, have become convinced that their pain is a disease and that only medicine can make them feel normal again.

#### **4.4.2 The challenge of insomnia**

According to Robertson (1987), insomnia is the inability to sleep accompanied by or as a result of burdens: sickness, financial worries, old age, grief, depression, divorce, or other causes. Inability to sleep during the night is also a burden in the life of a person after divorce. Parsons and Wicks (2003) in their clinical handbook of pastoral counselling state that those who have an inability to sleep during the night may not remember something immediately, but will remember it after sleep. Bransby (2002) indicates that between 20-30 per cent of the population are insomniacs. They feel isolated. Insomniacs may spend thirty minutes in bed before falling asleep, or they may fall asleep rapidly, but not stay asleep. Participant number 21 said that the divorce caused her to experience difficulties with sleeping. She indicated to the researcher that after the pain of divorce, for her to sleep, she was advised by her medical doctor to use sleeping tablets. She puts it this way:

*“In order for me to sleep, my private doctor advised me to use sleeping tablets.”*

Participant number 9 expressed it in this way:

*“After divorce, I was unable to sleep during the night, what I was always thinking is the mother of my children who divorced me”.*

Participant number 30 put things in this way:

*“I was unable to sleep.”*

#### **4.4.3 The challenge of a loss of appetite**

According to Robertson (1987) after divorce, discouragement can cause a loss of appetite. Participant number 1 indicated that she suffered from loss of appetite during the challenges of divorce. Another participant said:

*“I have a problem of not eating food, and that is very painful to me because I know that if I eat I will be better.”*

#### **4.4.4 The challenge of weight loss**

According to Robertson (1987), after divorce, discouragement can cause weight loss. Participant number 24 indicated that after divorce

*“I began to lose my weight. I visited my nearest clinic to get counselling, that is where I was told that your problem has affected your weigh, and you have lost weight.”*

#### **4.4.5 The challenge of behavioural reactions**

According to Bell (2015) behavioural therapy notes that behaviour is often learned and can therefore be unlearned. During the interviews, participant number 30 indicated that being a divorcee caused a change in lifestyle:

*“I was unable to handle the pain of divorce.”*

He pointed out that being divorced negatively affected him, and this is how he stated it:

*“After being divorced by my wife, it became difficult for me to walk in the streets of my village; I also did not want to eat food. Even today because of not getting care and counselling support from somewhere, it is difficult for me to walk in the streets. I don’t want to meet this woman because when I meet her it reminds me of the trauma I experienced.”*

## 4.5 Psychological challenges

### 4.5.1 The challenge of suicidal tendencies

According to Ravhudzulo (2007), the spirit of suicide is a most dangerous spirit that destroys many individuals and families. Individuals kill themselves after failing to solve problems or achieving something. Some people kill themselves after realizing that they are guilty or have made a mistake. This spirit convinces a divorcee not to seek advice, it tells the divorcee “advice for what?”, “Nobody can give you a better advice,” “and people are failing to solve their own problems.” The spirit further convinces one to go away to an isolated place, away from people so that one can kill oneself in an isolated place. The suicide spirit does not want you to seek help for you will conquer it. Furthermore, the spirit prevents you from sharing your problems with other people, especially members of the family. A divorcee who is rejected by their relatives and church members may think the best solution to solve this problem is to take their own life. The spirit convinces them “You are a failure, what are you living for?” “Don’t you think it is better that you are dead?” Ultimately, such an individual may commit suicide. This is the evil spirit that causes one not to accept and acknowledge him/her. The suicide spirit further plants pride in a person. You start to despise people and it becomes difficult for you to go and consult the people you despise, you feel that you have been belittled, so the best way is to die and part ways with people.

Stoney (2016) indicates that attempts at suicide and suicidal thoughts or feelings are usually a symptom that indicates that a person isn't coping, often as a result of some event or series of events that they personally find overwhelmingly traumatic or distressing. Robertson (1987) indicates that the desire or decision to kill oneself is in most cases the result of a state of acute depression. It may be brought on by health problems, pain, or the inability to handle frustration. Irresponsible desire behaviour may produce the strong desire to destroy oneself or to leave the world. Participant number 2 confirms that:

*“After I was divorced by my husband, I didn’t want to continue with life, one night I wanted to commit suicide, I took a rope, while my hands carried a rope, I was worrying inside that if I take my life, who will look after or take care of my children.”*

Participant number 5 put it in this way

*“One night while I was still in marriage, I felt that it is better for me not to live in this world. I phoned my friend and told him that I think that it is better for me not to continue living in this world. When I phoned him that night I was crying. He helped me a lot. The same things happened again after divorce, again the other night I had a painful crying, I phoned my friend and told him that I don’t see any reason of continues with life, I have a lot of debts, I am struggling financially, no one from the church leadership and from the relatives side care for me. Phoning those people helped me not to commit suicide. If you are alone you can tell yourself that now I am taking this decision, I am doing this. If I am saying I don’t see the reason to continue living, is like I am saying I am committing suicide. For me divorce is like death.”*

This was confirmed by participant number 23, who said,

*“One night I did not see the reason of continue living, I thought about to commit suicide. I believe that there is tough life after divorce; I am saying this from what I have experienced in life. But I thank God for not allowing me to take my life through in this difficult time of experiencing traumatic experiences where no one is showing support. By putting trust in God, I believed God will bring me through. I am not speaking about the God who did not say I would not ever walk through the fire and flood, He is the God who said the storms of life would not overflow me nor burn me up.”*

This was also confirmed by Craig (1983), who points out that divorced people are more likely to die at an early age. They attempt suicide and are more often involved in motor vehicle accidents.

Participant number 7 indicated that

*“...because of not getting pastoral care and counselling support after being divorced at an early age, I didn’t see the reason of continuing with the life of pain. I also thought of committing suicide or jumping to death. I had mixed feelings and stays in a state of confusion.”*

According to Munroe (2003), another reaction that may come to the mind of a divorcee after divorce is that they feel the ground sink under their feet and they react by trying to jump to another nearby rock. Many times this stems from fear or panic. Participant number 5 made it clear that

*“...what made me not to jump to another world of the dead people is that I put my faith in Jesus Christ, who is my Saviour and Lord, someone who solidly stands on the Rock that will never be moved.”*

Participant number 2 indicated that,

*“...after divorce, because of a lack of care and counselling I wanted to kill myself with a poison. To me, divorce was a spirit. It was like a depressing spirit. I felt empty and frustrated, but I hold my peace and remember that God is not far when it hurts”.*

Participant number 6 put it in this way

*“I’m struggling through an unwanted divorce. I am so in love with my wife. She occupies all of my thoughts. I’m 45 years old and I was married for 10 years. Once married I became a dad to two awesome kids she had from a previous marriage. She and I had one together who is now 8 years old. My wife left just a few weeks shy of finishing nursing school. I feel so used and taken advantage of. My dream was to leave my current employment of 12 years due to the physical nature of the job and begin a new career once she started nursing. Unbelievable credit debt, the loss of my wife and stepchildren, and the knowledge that she is in a relationship now with someone I was friends with has been crippling. There have been so many days I have struggled with suicide. I have very few friends, and no more family. Truly alone here. I try to be a good father but sometimes I just feel my son is better off not having a broken father in his life. I keep hoping that there will once again be light in my life, but the pain is just as raw today as it was back a year ago when she left.*

Masakona (2005) states that there are different nights that can befall you in life. Every night (including the divorce night) comes with its discouragement. Nights are not agents of either courage or hope. If you have been in a night of divorce, you may not understand the effects of a night in life. The night or pain of losing a marriage partner may lead you to feel like you are the first one to be in a divorce situation. When Masakona (1999) talks about suicide in the divorce situation, he indicates that many who commit suicide do that under the strong power of uncontrollable anger that results in frustration. No one has ever committed suicide while singing songs of praise and joy. All who die by suicide die with angry faces. People can overcome this. If you are at the verge of killing yourself, you should first ask yourself whether you are not taking that step because you are emotionally heated by the challenges of divorce. Have you prayed about it? Did God approve your plan? If not, why are you so quick to take such a decision?

#### **4.5.2 The challenge of frustration**

According to Schreimer (2014), people who are feeling frustrated are probably really feeling helpless at a deeper level. Frustration stems from the inability to manipulate variables in your environment to your liking. This inability amounts to the same thing as helplessness. What usually ends up happening though is that a frustrated person causes unnecessary distress to themselves and others by attempting to repress that painful feeling of helplessness and replace it with anger, both because of the consequences of their actions and because it's impossible to be a positive, happy person when they are angry all the time. Participant number 26 indicated that:

*“I was well organized financially; but it is still very frustrating to raise fatherless children alone. All my children need a father figure”*

When asked how this affected her church life, she reported that,

*“...my experiences left me with a sense of guilt and self -condemnation. I live in shame; I also feel inferior and cannot enjoy fruitful Christianity because I live in frustration, jealousy and unforgiving spirit”.*

### 4.5.3 The challenge of cognitive reactions

According to Bell (2015), cognitive processes refer to our thoughts, including ideas, beliefs and attitudes. Cognitive therapy can help people cope with their emotions, with their circumstances and can contribute to lower stress levels. When a person experiences the pain of divorce, it affects the way that person lives, thinks or see things in life. The way in which divorce affects divorced men and women's thoughts is not the same. This is confirmed by the following statement from participant number 5, who said,

*“I lost my mind; I suffered from psychological trauma after being kicked out of bedroom and out of marriage by the father of my children. After being kicked out of bedroom, I was forced to sleep with children. That was very painful, even my children were surprised what is happening between I and their father. After divorce, the pain had serious impact on my mind, because I was experiencing difficulties in thinking about the husband who divorced me. Before divorce, we use to eat together, sleep together, walk together, bath together, shopping together, praying together, going to church together, having sexual intercourse together, but now I am in pain, I am alone. I keep myself busy by going to church and reading books.”*

### 4.5.4 The challenge of stigma and discrimination

During the interviews, the researcher discovered that participants live in a context of fear and anxiety associated with the stigma and discrimination attached to divorce. Bransby (2002) indicates that to discriminate is to differentiate treatment or favour on a basis other than individual merit. Divorce is viewed as a life-threatening disease and the belief is that being a divorcee is the result of moral faults such as promiscuity or deviant sex that deserves to be punished. One of the most common practices that indicate discrimination against people who have divorced lies in the name given to a Venda female divorcee, namely “*mbuyavhuhadzi*.” Participants indicated that they were separated from other people like those who had leprosy in the Bible. They indicated that people were doing that to try to reduce the number of divorcees. That shows that family members lack knowledge about the

mode of transmission of the disease and they end up discriminating against the patients. Two participants responded as follows:

*“In my church, I was not accepted because I am a mbuyavhuhadzi.”*

Another one said:

*“After being divorced by my wife, as a church pastor, the whole church members decided to leave me alone in the church, they went to start a new church which has a new name.”*

Church members also discriminate against divorcees due to their marriage status. This is evident from the following quotation:

*“And he said one day he went to the church, he discovered that church members did not want to sit next to him”.*

Another participant also said:

*“So I have another idea of moving to the other church with my children.”*

When a person reaches the stage of desiring to move to another church because of the stigma and discrimination attached to divorce, the degree of stress is very high. There is clear evidence of the importance of the role that the church plays in providing support and care for divorcees. However, not all church responses are positive. Divorcees who are members of the church can find themselves discriminated against.

Stigma can affect how others treat divorcees and how they view themselves. The stigma associated with divorce is such that an individual known to be or suspected of being infected with divorce may be excluded from community activities and suffer isolation or abandonment. It is essential for providers to be supportive of divorcees dealing with the burden of stigma (Sheffield & Casale, 2004). Stigma is founded on fear and misconception. It judges behaviour that is considered deviant, a belief that divorcees have contracted the ‘disease’ due to an unacceptable lifestyle, and some believe that it is the result of a moral fault that deserves punishment (Sheffield & Casale, 2004). This puts the caregivers in a situation of not knowing whether to divulge the patient’s status to the person who is

asking, regardless of whether the person is a relative or not. Divorcees are especially concerned about revealing their challenges and marital status to children,

*“My children asked me what I am experiencing, so I have seen that, if I tell them, it will hurt them. So I do not know whether I should tell my children or not ----, I really do not know. I think that if I tell them, they will tell other people outside the family and I feel ashamed about that” (she looks so uncertain).*

According to Weaver (2012), people who experience discrimination while depressed have more depressive episodes, social difficulties, and issues finding and keeping a job. Discrimination can prevent people with depression, who may be worried about disclosing their diagnosis, from getting the help they need.

#### **4.5.5 The challenge of experiencing trauma and having a scar**

The research findings reveal that, after divorce, a divorcee is traumatized. There are few other human experiences more traumatic than a divorce (Munroe, 1992). Retief (2000) indicates that in some cases the trauma of divorce is like the death of a loved one. In fact, bereavement may be easier to bear. A divorce action has a tremendous emotional effect on the spouse who is left behind as well as on the children. Many participants have been left with scars and sores that have not healed. Munroe (2003) says that trauma is an injury, a wound, or a shock. It amounts to an earthquake to the body, soul, or spirit. Hawkins (2001) states that some people who come to church have been abused and traumatized in the past and may struggle daily with desperation and despair. They need help to understand and manage their feelings. This is confirmed by the following statement from participant number 13:

*“After divorce, I had an injury, a wound, or a shock. I was not feeling well in my body, soul and spirit. I was distressed. I became irrational, my mind began to act without thinking properly. After being forsaken by my husband, I felt as if my arm was torn away from my body. I had a tremendous pain. I had a scar. I became handicapped. I failed to do some of the things I used to do while I was still in marriage. I had an internal bleeding.”*

#### 4.5.6 The challenge of distress

When one experiences divorce, the first thing that happens after a break in the emotional bond is distress. Being a divorcee brings distress of the soul. The first hurt is intense and sharp, caused by the tearing apart of the bonds (Munroe, 2003). This is confirmed by participant number 14, who indicated during interview that,

*“This life of being a divorcee is stressing me. As a distressed person, I feel all alone, in a sinking ship without a lifeboat or life preserver. What is adding pain on me is that I still miss him. I know my husband who was an alcoholic he didn’t treat me right, he beat me and treated me pretty badly. He used to curse me in the presence of my children, he beat me, and slaps me in the presence of my children, but what is comforting me is my being God’s child. I am coping because I use to call upon the Lord through prayer (Psalm 18:6 says, in my distress, I call upon the Lord)”.*

#### 4.5.7 The challenge of handling stress

During interview, participant number 20 explained that the pain of being divorced brought with it serious stress.

*“Because of not getting support from my nearest people, I failed to handle stress. That stress produced breakdown. I was not able to work through things mentally, so I escaped into some sort of unreality, some sort of fantasy. Participant number 6 put things in this way “What the challenge brings to me is a serious pain. I felt that I have disturbed in my mind because by that time I had a serious stress. It was difficult for me to listen also those who are trying to help me.”*

According to Munroe (2003), breakdown reflects the person’s mental capacity to deal with things. There are people living in various stages of emotional aftershocks and breakdowns following divorces. Many of them are good-looking, well dressed, and smiling, but they are not dealing with reality. They are living in some kind of fantasy. If they do not get support they can end up having chronic emotional sickness.

#### 4.5.8 The challenge of denial

According to Rye and Moore (2015), people sometimes ignore and deny the losses they have experienced following a divorce. Denial might help temporarily because it allows the person to focus on other things. However, it is not a good long-term strategy because unacknowledged losses can interfere with a sense of peace. Denial is one of our basic defences when we feel threatened and it is understandable that people commonly deny when they face the end of their marriage. Coming to accept reality requires courage and faith, and acceptance of divorce is necessary before further adjustment can occur (Redding, 2012). When denial cannot be maintained, anger takes control of a person's emotions. Participant number 28 struggled to accept her divorce and the challenges that came after:

*“I became angry at my husband who has divorced me and I felt like the end of the world. I began to realize how difficult life is going to be for me as a divorcee because financially she was the only person working in the family. Now I am a divorcee, I did not see any reason why I was still living because I was still thinking of building a healthy marriage with her. During interview with participant number 21, she indicated that after being divorced by my husband, denial came to me. It was difficult for me to accept what happened.”*

Retief (2000) states that the tremendous shock that your spouse has divorced you is followed by a period of denial. You refuse to believe that what happened is the truth. Denial often engenders a powerful hope that it is all a nightmare, a terrible mistake. Your spouse will return - patience is all that is needed. This leads to appeasement, attempts to win him or her back by arguing, reasoning, compliancy. You are willing to take the blame for the marriage break-up. You apologize profusely for your faults and promise to reform, even though you are the innocent party. According to Charles (2015), when divorce happens, many people have a very hard time accepting it. They believe that their partner will change their mind. In some instances, they do, in some instances, they do not. Hendrickson and Fitzpatrick (2006) say that when we have a problem one of our most common human responses is to say “Problem? There is no problem here!” Munroe (2003) indicates that denial is a serious problem among many Christians. They feel that to admit they are hurting is admitting failure in faith. They hide in the cloak of false spirituality. Hurting people attend many prayer

meetings. They pray loudly for other people, but will not admit that they need prayer. That seems to them to contradict positive confession. They need to say, “Help! Can anyone pray for me? I’m hurting. This thing is killing me.” Instead, they deny reality. They say, “I’m not hurting. I took it to the Lord and left it there,” yet at 2 am they are tossing and turning with distress.

#### **4.5.9 The challenge of withdrawal**

Participant number 24 stated that,

*“...after I was divorced from a marriage relationship, the first way I usually react in this difficult time is to withdraw. After my family is divided, I withdrew from my church members, closest friends, relatives and neighbours. What made me to withdraw is because I didn’t get any pastoral care and counselling support.”*

Munroe (2003) indicates that the first way people usually react in times of great loss is to withdraw, a result of rejections, depression, and great loss.

### **4.6 Emotional challenges**

#### **4.6.1 The challenge of anger**

Masakona (1999) states that quick anger is an emotion that results from lack of self-control. Many times when a person becomes heated up with anger, what comes out is “I will fix him/her, or show him/her who I am”. The devil deceives every angry person by giving him or her a false resolution of using his or her anger to put things right. If somebody has offended a person, and that person allows himself to solve the problem through quick anger, he will solve nothing but instead new problems will emerge.

Redding (2012) indicates that anger is one of the strongest feelings divorcing persons experience. Rooted in feelings of hurt, abandonment and helplessness, the rage that some experience is frightening and unlike any anger they have felt before (Redding, 2012). Rye and Moore (2015) cite McCabe (2013), who found that over 60% of divorced individuals believe they have been wronged by their exes. Common transgressions included deceit, infidelity, failure to fulfil obligations, verbal and physical abuse, gossiping, and financial misconduct. Given these harmful actions, it is not

surprising that many people are angry toward their exes. Anger can keep painful experiences alive and can have a negative impact on the person's mental and physical health. What is more, it can also have a negative impact on the children involved. Once the person understands that their partners do not intend to return and work on the marriage, many people experience high levels of anger.

As a divorced father, participant number 15 describes the anger he had in his life:

*"After I was divorced by my wife, because of quick anger I went to take a gun so that I can shoot and finish her and her relatives who were in my house helping her to collect luggage or goods or clothes. Another participant said that I got so burned up with anger that I moved out of the room and started breaking the window panes of an expensive vehicle that was parked in the car port."*

Another participant (participant number 4) indicated that,

*"...because of quick anger, my wife wanted to kill me with a motorcar, she jumped inside the car and drive it to me, and fortunately her plan didn't work."*

According to Munroe (2003) anger is a temporary attitude that can cause behaviour with permanent consequences. Many divorces are the result of someone's temporary fit of anger and of things said in anger. Hendrickson and Fitzpatrick (2006) indicate that another common response to memory loss is anger. We may be tempted to blame others for our difficulties and respond with anger, or we may take out our anger on those whom we love. When we respond this way, we will end up driving our loved ones further away from us.

During the interview with participant number 1, she stated that,

*"...even though I didn't experience any physical sickness, divorce brought to me a challenge of anger. I thought that there were people who have contributed to the breakdown and fall of my marriage so that I can find myself in this painful situation. I am no longer visiting people at their homes and I decided not to talk to them. I was hurting, and divorce situation leaves unhealed wounds to me and my children"*

What participant number 1 said resonates well with what Masakona (1999) says, who states that divorce is hurting, destructive and leaves unhealed wounds in children. Most of the dreadful decisions are taken when one is angry and uncontrollable. The person responds more to the voice of emotions than the voice of the spirit. Masakona (1999) indicates that quick anger drives some to a point where they become disloyal to anything they come across. Drivers, if controlled by these emotions, pass red lights, overtake at barrier lines, no longer stop at stop signs and drive at maximum speed. This may end up in a loss of innocent lives through an accident that could have been avoided. Some angry people become passive, refusing to eat even if they are not fasting. Divorcees were not born angry, so they can overcome the challenge of anger.

#### **4.6.2 The challenge of worry**

According to Adams (2003), to care for the body means also to refrain from worry. Worry leads to ulcers, ulcers may become the occasion for more worry or fear, which leads to more ulcers, *ad infinitum*. Participant number 30 revealed to the researcher that after being divorced,

*“...I became worried and saw my problems as the end of the world. And ulcers started to develop in my body”.*

During the interview with participant number 28, she indicated that after divorce she worried about finances, questions about legal obligations and lost hope for the future.

According to Rye and Moore (2015), some of the things people worry about following a divorce can include your financial standing after a divorce. You may ask yourself how you are going to make ends meet, bills need to be paid and mouths need to be fed. You can worry about what it will be like to live alone.

#### **4.6.3 The challenge of sadness**

According to Rye and Moore (2015), sadness is a reaction to divorce. Loss of companionship and intimacy combined with feeling of loneliness can be jarring. Having to leave a home in which you have invested much time and energy can make you feel like you are losing a part of yourself. There is nothing worse than not being able to see your children as often as you used to. All of those losses

can be hard and may lead to feelings of sadness. Participant 1 experienced the challenge of sadness. She indicated that,

*“...after being divorced by the father of my three children I had feelings of sadness”.*

#### **4.6.4 The challenge of anxiety**

Rye and Moore (2010) indicate that anxiety is a common reaction to divorce because so many aspects of the person's life changes after a divorce. It is not surprising that such a person would worry about what the future holds. Divorce can feel like you have been plucked from your familiar surroundings by a giant crane and dropped into a new and completely unfamiliar location. You are suddenly faced with the task of creating a new life and a new routine in the midst of considerable uncertainty.

During interview with participant number 13, she put things in this way:

*“After being divorced by my husband, I had a time of severe anxiety and panic attacks that lasted nearly two months. I asked my friends to pray for me, cried out to the Lord, asking for His help. God helped me in this difficult time.”*

Participant number 1 indicated to the researcher that,

*“I still struggle with anxiety, but the Lord continues to heal my heart”.*

#### **4.6.5 The challenge of pain**

During interview, participant number 30 revealed that,

*“...after I was divorced I had a challenge of living in pain because of the nasty experiences I am going through. As a victim of divorce, my trauma developed to me by these endless experiences. I also relate my pain of living with anger and shame after divorce or rejection.”*

Speaking about the pain of becoming a divorcee, participant number 1 said,

*“...and I began an unexpected journey. I became a divorcee. It hasn’t been easy. I stumble badly, up one day and down the next.” She goes on to say: “After more than five years of being a divorcee, I do still long for someone to park his car and sleep with me”.*

Participant number 15 indicated that when denial cannot be maintained, anger takes control of a person’s emotions. She struggled to accept the pain of divorce. She stated that being divorced by the husband whom you loved is so painful that one feels like one is lost. She pointed out that,

*“...church members began to treat me very strangely. Some who were trying to console me, their words and attitudes were confusing.”*

She continued:

*“Even those who were very close to me, the ones I hoped they would offer sound comfort, confused me the most. I felt like half of myself, I was torn off my body.”*

What participant number 15 said is in line with what Ravhudzulo (2005) says, namely that there are many things that can make a person feel lonely. Maybe a person feels lonely because a friend has moved away, or because there is no one with whom a person can truly connect among all the people they know.

Another part of the separation distress that was revealed during the interviews is depression, caused by contrasting how you thought things were going to be for the rest of your life and how they will be after divorce. This was confirmed by participant number 29, who indicated that:

*“Following the pain of being divorced, the feeling of depression hits me. I began to think about the plans and dreams I had together with my husband, and now all of those are gone with the wind. I have been rejected, and future I planned cannot come to pass. Even though I did not get pastoral care and support from church members, I strongly believed in God as my healer. I was sure that God is with me during this difficult time.”*

Participant number 21 put things in this way:

*“Because of the pain that I was felt, I still remember one day when I was a programme-director at the funeral of a certain man in our village, it was the day that I felt that I am the one who was supposed to be buried, I wish it would be me who was to be buried. I had a serious pain; don’t you hear that I have admired the death of that man? Divorce pain can take you and put you in that thinking.”*

#### **4.6.6 The challenge of depression**

According to Weaver (2012), depression makes it difficult to function in daily life. People who experience discrimination while depressed had more depressive episodes, social difficulties, and issues finding and keeping a job. Discrimination can prevent people with depression, who may be worried about disclosing their diagnosis, from getting the help they need. In this research finding, discrimination refers to unjust treatment of a divorcee. When a person divorces, the person being left behind will generally experience symptoms of depression. In these instances, many may benefit from medication, psychotherapy and spiritual counselling (Charles, 2015). Depression is the point at which the divorcees approach reality, faces the truth and decides if he or she can walk through it. It is the most common challenge (Munroe, 2003).

Participant number 4 testified that as a divorcee,

*“...I was indeed discriminated against. After divorce, the church gave me bad treatment; it contributed a lot towards my discrimination. The way I was treated by the church was very questionable. According to me, I think this tendency is not good in the church, especially to a divorcee who lives good life before the eyes of God and before the eyes of church members. I feel very disappointed about it. Church members also regard me as immoral and I was totally not accepted.*

Participant number 8 also stated that,

*“...discrimination is caused by fear, because married fathers and mothers in the church fear that we divorces may break their families, and it is very difficult to convince the church to involve us in the church activities. She told the researcher*

*that many church members are very suspicious of us. We are not trusted, most men and women in the church do not accept us, and they take us as adultery”.*

She quoted section 9 of the constitution of South Africa

*“...no-one should be discriminated against on the ground of marital status”.*

During an interview with participant number 4 at his home, he expressed his opinion with regard to the challenge of discrimination that divorcees are facing today:

*“In the church there are those who told me that ‘If you are a genuine Christian you wouldn’t have divorce and had a baby outside marriage’. Many married church members, including a church pastor, have left me more embarrassed than ever. I got so frustrated after hearing one of the church members again saying: ‘I get so sick of people who divorce their marriage running around from one man to another and one woman to another, destroying our families; and yet pretending to be Christians and attending our church services.’ In the church, I am experiencing difficulties; I think it is better for me to look for a church that will not abuse me”.*

During interview with participant number 30, she indicated that,

*“...my depression stems from feelings of rejection which led me to withdrawal from everybody. Another challenge is that, as a divorcee, I was also burdened by the responsibility of taking care of my fatherless children. I was not given support by the church. I was not working; the challenge of the children was painful both economically and morally. The trauma of divorce also affected my children badly. My children get more frustrated and angry when they see their mother in the company of a new husband. The pain and anger displayed by my disadvantaged children when they watch strange children enjoying the benefits that belong to them were disappointing them. They ended in depression.”*

During one interview, participant number 9 stated that after being divorced, the challenges brought serious pain. For her, separating from a man whom she loved so much was a painful wound. This pain can be exacerbated by not getting pastoral care and counselling support.

*“It was difficult for me to handle this pain. This pain also touched my children. By that time because of frustration to me and my children who were very disappointed, I did not think about various techniques of handling divorce situation after divorce. When divorce came to us, our youngest child was three years old. Because of not knowing various ways of handling divorce situation to heal me and my children, my children lost their identity.”*

Even relatives do not always show me support to survive. One participant explained:

*“When I was leading a funeral as a programme director, in the graveyard when the coffin of the deceased go down, I wish it could be me who was supposed to be buried. Because of the divorce pain that I am experiencing, I was jealousy of the dead body going down or inside the grave. You know this is very painful. I was depressed, confused and blamed myself. I wanted to die. I was overwhelmed. As a divorcee I was faced with the threat of losing health, relationships with family and church hope.”*

#### **4.6.7 The challenge of loneliness**

According to Robertson (1987), loneliness usually refers to the lack of companionship and fellowship. Lonely persons feel sad or dejected, and the sadness may be manifested in melancholic sighing, feeling worthless, crying easily, anxiety, and restlessness. Mark (1979) states that the problem of loneliness has reached epidemic proportions in our day. He says loneliness is the most devastating malady of this age. On the personal data inventory sheets that are filled out by our counselees, the problem of loneliness is mentioned as being one of the most serious problems they face. Loneliness affects peoples of every age, sex, social standing, etc. It is a universal problem. The feeling of loneliness, then, is a symptom of a deeper problem. It often arises because a person does not have or maintain a proper relationship with God and with other people. According to Magezi (2007), a lonely person feels emotionally isolated, loneliness and mourning, sense of loss, guilt,

anger, grief and socio-economically deprived. Self-esteem is threatened as well. According to Redding (2012), divorce brings home the awareness of one's existence as an individual. The challenge is to learn to bear the sense of alienation and loss, while discovering a sense of comfort and peace in solitude. Though there may be an initial flight into frenzied activities and social involvements, ultimately the process calls one to face oneself. Ramatla (2006) states that when lonely, divorcees may feel that they are the only person in the world with these challenges and may feel rejected by family and friends. They may feel as if they have lost control over their lives and destinies, over relationship and privacy, and especially loss of self-worth. According to Venter (1991), it is true that one's loneliness can become so intense that one feels completely lost and forsaken. It can become very hard and sometimes it feels unbearable and too much to handle. Sometimes one feels jealousy of those who still have marriage partners.

Participant number 1 indicated to the researcher that,

*“You start to face many things alone, responsibility, is tough especially to me as the one who is staying with children. You are two in one; you are acting as a mother and as father”.*

During another interview, participant number 10 revealed that,

*“...my discrimination in the church contributes much toward my loneliness”.*

He testified that he feels lonely.

He said that his loneliness is caused by lack of acceptance and support in the church. Another participant confirmed that,

*“...my loneliness is a major concern in my life in the church. I feel unaccepted in the church, and sometimes I strongly tempted to leave the church because this church is not sympathetic to my situation. I stayed away from formal church meetings because I feel unwanted. I feel inferior because church members were undermining me”.*

Participant number 13 confessed that,

*“...I would rather be alone than have another failing relationship.*

During interview with participant number 26, she stated that,

*“...I have stopped attending some worship services because I feel neglected, the church has done nothing to address my situation and offer me support as a divorcee who is experiencing challenges. I don't live right, I have suffered severe discrimination. I am damaged greatly. It affects my children as well. The church members and church leaders do have negative mind set about my situation. They are not supporting me. I have skills and abilities that can help in church committees, but I am useless in this church, I am treated like a visitor. I am regarded as threat to men in the church, including pastors. I feel lonely.”*

Participant number 17 indicated that,

*“...I am a divorced mother, my husband left me alone with three children. Because of a lack of support from the church members and relatives, from the beginning, I regarded myself as a failure in life. But through reading God's Word and going to attend church services, I started to measure my personal worth by the fact that God gave me value before anyone ever met me. I saw God of love who loved so much enough to send His Son Jesus to redeem me if there had been no one else on earth. Because of God's Word, I started to see myself not as a failure in marriage. As a child of God, I began to take my challenges and give them to God, and ask Him how to go on from there. I was comforted by what Jesus did to the woman taken in adultery that the Pharisees judged her as a failure because of her actions.”*

With His love, Jesus judged her actions and told her to go forth and not to do those things anymore. He forgave her actions and gave her back self-worth.

#### **4.6.8 The challenge of emotional wear and tear**

According to Craig (1983), in the two years following their divorce, people often show such signs of emotional wear and tear as anxiety, depression and anger, as well as feelings of rejection and incompetence. Participant number 26 indicated that,

*“...after I was divorced by my husband who left me with 6 children, it was very difficult for me to believe and accept that what happened, had happened. Two years following my divorce, I had emotional wear and tear such as anxiety. I was depressed, and feel rejected as a mother who is experiencing difficult pain.”*

#### **4.6.9 The challenge of emotional reaction**

According to Boraine (2015), many people in South Africa have experienced some kind of traumatic event. When trauma has occurred it taxes the normal coping skills of an individual. Timely, skilful, sensitive and effective intervention may greatly reduce the need for long-term care. A person who has experienced a traumatic event is a person who is surviving contradictions. Trauma is always linked to a loss such as loss of faith, loss of hope, loss of feelings of safety and security, loss of self-image. After experiencing a traumatic event a person is more often than not left with a range of symptoms, e.g. depressions, fear, obsessions, feelings of inferiority, feelings of a foreshortened future, guilt, helplessness and the meaninglessness of the event. Participant 21 stated that her emotions had been affected by divorce:

*“When my divorce occurred, I became frustrated and disappointed in life. I see myself as a person who failed in life, because I failed in marriage. That divorce stressed me a lot. I was in need of counselling, but the church did not come to me to show me support.”*

#### **4.6.10 The challenge of bitterness/discouragement**

Participant number 27 indicated that,

*“I don’t understand why the church is struggling to accommodate me as a divorcee. When I was still in marriage with my husband, I held a remarkable*

*position in the church. But now I am divorced, but members of the church behave like they don't even know me. I have become a total stranger in my own spiritual home."*

He added that,

*"It seems like the guarantee for genuine church membership, in the RCSA is a marital status. I had bitterness and discouragement. It was long that I was fighting this bitterness, pain and rejection. The church was hurting me, but I never lose hope in this hopeless world."*

#### **4.6.11 The challenge of guilt**

According to Ramatla (2006), after being divorced, many people blame themselves for letting this happen to them, and feel guilty towards other members of family. Retief (2000) states that although you are the innocent party, you may feel you contributed to the breakdown of your marriage. This may contain an element of truth. As stress escalated in the marriage, you may have overreacted, even though you were not the main cause of the divorce. Guilt and rejection are closely tied to acceptance and loneliness. Often the one who initiates the legal action struggles with the guilt of hurting someone they used to care for, of going against deeply felt values and beliefs about marriage. The one who is left struggles with a strong sense of rejection, self-doubt and pain (Redding, 2012). Participant number 21 confessed that,

"I used to live in guilt and was always feeling shameful, rejected and miserable. Divorcee's needs pastoral care and counselling support. The church should provide understanding, love and companionship for all divorcees. The church should come with ways to remedy brokenness in divorcees."

#### **4.6.12 The challenge of rejection**

Lynette (2004) concurs that divorce is painful. If a person is going through a divorce, they deal with grief, with rejection, with having a heart broken. During the interview with participant number 2, she stated that,

*“...after divorce, I was rejected by church members whom I regarded as friends of the family. I saw rejection from the people, men and women who were very close to my family. 90% of them were no longer greeting me and my children. When I went to church with my children, people did not want to give me a lift when going to church.”*

Participant number 2 continued by saying that,

*“In Africa, from the relatives, an African man does not make a mistake in marriage. When I was divorced, I was rejected by my relatives; I was also rejected even by my father. My father failed to support me because I was married to a church pastor. According to him, a pastor cannot divorce, by that reason he thought it was me who started with a divorce. That is the reason why my father failed to show me support. Relatives failed to give me support.”*

She finally indicated that,

*“...I was rejected by the former family friends”*

Another divorcee put it in this way:

*“As a divorcee, I have been hurt by divorce, rejection, and all other challenges of life, the church failed to tolerate me.”*

In the challenge of rejection, participant number 28 made it clear that in the church, after being divorced by his wife, he was not treated like other Christians:

*“I was not trusted by the rest of the church. Married men and women suspect and hate me. They have got some fears that I will break their homes. That’s why I suffer rejection and unnecessary humiliation. Other male church members accused me of taking their wives, I was threatened to be hurt by the owners of wives, and I also received phone calls that are accusing me. People were gossiping about me in the community. I do understand that pastoral visits like these are to be done to help*

*divorcees to can share their bitter experiences, and help them manage their stress.”*

Rejection of divorcees is not a false story, it is present in our church. This was reiterated by participant number 11, who said that:

*“After I was divorced by my wife because of having an extra-marital affair and a child outside marriage, many church members saw me as a failure and a second-class citizen. The church rejects me, and my friends left me. I did not receive any pastoral care and counselling support. By that time I was a church leader, I became suspended, the church never allowed me to get into the pulpit again.”*

Participant number 19 put it in this way,

*“In the church I was rejected. Before divorce, I used to be given a time to pray in the church services and church conference, but after divorce it was taboo in the church to be given this opportunity.”*

#### **4.6.13 The challenge of confusion**

According to Macarthur (1994), if we are working with a counselee who seems confused or discouraged, we must be careful. Dealing with a counselee’s confusion or lack of organization may not be sufficient, we may have to go deeper and address issues of the heart before we can help that person. Fitzpatrick and Hendrickson (2006) state that many divorcees experiencing painful emotions are confused about what has happened to them, and wonder what, if anything, they could do about it. Participant number 11 became confused when he received a divorce letter. This is how he put it:

*“I was confused and did not understand why the mother of my children divorced me. After divorce, the truth is that I wept uncontrollably and could not sleep when I realized that I am left alone with four children and I am not working. I am struggling to get food.”*

#### 4.6.14 The challenge of isolation

According to Francis (2013), isolation can become a huge issue. Divorcees pick up many wounds. Attitudes are hardened. Later on, if those wounds are not dealt with and healed, the “baggage” from the broken marriage is carried over into a new relationship. Often the process repeats itself. More hurts and wounds eventuate.

Participant number 16 said that,

*“As a divorcee I was isolated (not included) by the church, I did not receive care and counselling, I was excluded in the church matters.”*

#### 4.6.15 The challenge of withdrawal into oneself

During interview, participant number 17 said that,

*“...the painful situation made me to feel that it is good to withdraw into myself, to isolate myself from help. I wanted to imprison myself within myself. In this time of great trauma, I trusted in my heart. But I was helped by God’s Word.” Proverbs 28:26 holds wisdom for this type of wrong reaction. The verse says: ‘He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whose walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.’ Isolation caused me to do all sorts of things: stay home alone, go out to eat and sit by myself, choose the back row away from everyone at church, not to talk to anyone about my situation. God’s Word to Adam opened my eyes, “It is not good for man to be alone.” (Gen. 2:18). As a divorcee, the Bible helped me a lot not to see things in a foolish way, and not to work things alone. I started to tell myself that God did not design me as a mankind to be alone, even though I am a divorcee.”*

Munroe (2003) points out that a person walking in isolation is trying to use hurt and pride to bandage a pained soul, and it may hide the wound, but it never keeps it from hurting. Isolation will not bring healing to that sore. He adds that a person walking alone is also suffering from self-pity. First they put on bandages of pride, and then comfort themselves with self-pitying. They walk around saying,

“I don’t need anybody! Besides, I am obviously not worthy of anyone. I’m a failure. I am not worth anything to anyone else”.

#### **4.6.16 The challenge of a broken heart, a crushed spirit, and a painful soul**

Divorce tragedy results in three basic traumas: a broken heart, a crushed spirit, and a painful soul (Munroe, 2003). According to Munroe (2003), a broken heart is a terrible experience. Sometimes your heart literally feels as if it is being ripped apart. Broken hearts are real. They mean broken lives. This was stated during interview by participant number 3, who indicated that:

*“My pain is that, when I was divorced by my husband, I was still need to stay with that man in our marriage relationship. But when that divorce happens, my heart was broken. I was expecting to be visited by church members and pastors but none of them came to see me and heal my heart. Because I am a child of God, what is always comforting me is the Words of Jesus in Luke 4:18 that he had come to mend broken hearts, among other things.”*

The interviews with participants showed that a broken heart also means a crushed spirit. Here, life seems to stop, a divorcee wants to say, “Stop the world, and let me get off.” A divorcee does not want to go to work, see anyone, or even eat food. All those things to a divorcee mean death. A divorcee becomes isolated and dies socially, which may encourage the person to die physically. This was confirmed by participant number 12, who indicated that:

*“I did not want to go to work. But what was worrying is that where does my children get food? Who will pay my electricity? But the Word of God comforted me a lot”.*

Many participants indicated that they know some divorcees who even experienced emotional suicide. According to Munroe (2003), people who have committed emotional or mental suicide never have a relationship with anyone again. They never try to establish emotional bonding again, it hurts too much. Other participants believe everyone is out to get them. The hurt has resulted in a lack of trust and an expectation of being hurt again. This was confirmed by participant number 28, who indicated that,

*“After being divorced by my husband I had an emotional suicide. I told myself that I will never have a relationship with anyone again. But what gave me comfort as a Christian is that Jesus is my physician, He is my antidote for the poison of divorce. In the Bible verse Psalm 43:5, which gives me a true comfort as a divorcee, “Why are you cast down, o my soul? And are you disquieted within me? Hope in God: For I shall yet praise Him, who is health my countenance and my God”. Jesus is not my only God, He is my health. I also get comfort from Psalm 34:17-19 which says that when the righteous cry, no matter how many their afflictions, the Lord will deliver them out of their troubles. When I read this verse, I said, “God, does that mean when someone is going through a divorce, you are nearer to them than you ever were?” The Lord answered, “Yes”. During this time, when I felt God is farthest away, yet that is when he was nearest. I felt God who was saying to me, I am near to the broken-hearted and will save those with a crushed spirit. As a divorcee, I saw that there is help in God. I did not allow these painful feelings and challenges to control my life. As a child of God, I began to take control of my challenges and turn those challenges over to Jesus. Jesus is my healer, and I allowed Him to heal me.*

Participant number 21 stated that my marriage involves emotions, so a breakdown leads to the tearing apart of soul ties between a man and his wife. During divorce,

*“I was destroyed, and it is difficult for me to recover because I according to my knowledge a vow is unto death.”*

#### **4.6.17 The challenge of blaming yourself “why me”?**

During the interview with participant number 16, she pleaded with tears in her eyes:

*“Pastor, will you please help me. I have lost my identity. I don’t know what to call myself now. I have divorced three husbands in a row. In all these divorces I am blaming myself.*

#### 4.6.18 The challenge of loss of self-worth

According to Retief (2000), single people often feel left out. If you are single because you are divorced, the situation may seem worse. You may be made to feel that old friends now see you as a threat to their marriage. The loss of self-worth is usually one of the consequences of a divorce action, especially if, as the innocent party, you have done your best to save your marriage. The loss of confidence and self-esteem is further complicated if you have been the victim of physical or verbal abuse. The lies, insults and accusations that have been hurled at you by your partner make you feel worthless. You may feel you are not good, and you are ugly. According to participant number 10, after being divorced by her husband after a marriage that lasted for 5 years,

*“I often felt left out. As a divorcee, my situation became worse. I was made to feel I was dumped by my old friends who now see me as a threat to their marriages. After going to God, I saw things in a new eye; I believed that, casual sexual relationship is not an option. I am worth more than that. I place a huge value on myself as God’s child, created in his image. I told myself that it was not my fault that I am single. No one can manufacture a partner for me I trusted God to undertake for me. I did not panic and get angry, resentful and impatient. What I did best was to concentrate on growing in my relationship with God and entrust my desire to him. I believed that the only identity that has eternal worth lies in being a child of God. I believed that by being a Christian as a divorcee, my sins have been forgiven and I am a bona fide member of God’s family. I have an eternal inheritance and the Holy Spirit assures me that I belong to God. My body is the temple of God.”*

A glorious body awaits me as,

*“I discover my true identity in Him. I do not have to boost my self-image by having a relationship with someone, especially if it is a relationship that dishonours God.”*

Participant number 7 also stated that a loss of self-worth is the consequence of divorce for the innocent party who has done their best to save their marriage.

*“The loss of confidence and loss of self-worth came to me because I have been the victim of physical or verbal abused. The lies, insults and accusations that have been hurled at me by my husband make feel worthless. I felt I am not good enough for anyone who looks at me. Because my husband divorced me, I assumed that I must have done something wrong. I felt ugly or old. But I trusted God to heal my broken heart. I believed that my worth is found in the value of God places on me. As I believed that and appropriate it, my confidence returned and with it joy came back to me. That is why I am feeling better.”*

#### **4.6.19 The challenge of self-pity**

According to Retief (2000) the fact that a divorcee has been forgiven does not mean that the consequences of his/her actions are negated. A divorcee must not give in to self-pity and bitterness, especially if his/her spouse remarries and his/her children begin to call their stepparent ‘mummy’ or ‘daddy’. Before God, he/she has to accept the consequences, thank God for forgiving him/her and get on with life. Participant number 28 indicated that after her husband divorced her and went to another wife she was not lost in self-pity. What she did was only to look unto God.

#### **4.6.20 The challenge of moods**

According to Retief (2000), the period of adjustment after your divorce and struggle to find a new identity may be accompanied by severe moods swings. It may take time to regain your control emotions. You may feel hostile towards God for allowing this situation to develop. This anger with God will add to your guilt because you know you should not feel this way. At times, your anger may be directed at your ex-spouse, their new partner or even your children, to be followed by deep remorse and the ever-present guilt. During interview with participant number 28, she stated:

*“After divorce, I felt depressed the fear that I will be alone for ever, rejected and unwanted. My mirror showed that I am ageing and I wondered, as a woman, if anyone will find me attractive again. I experienced a great surge of hope when I met someone I like and relief that he finds me attractive. The period of emotional adjustment was so severe to me. I felt that is like God is punishing me for long-*

*forgotten sins. What gave me comfort is the true knowledge of the Bible that I know that my life is in God's hands."*

#### **4.6.21 The challenge of emotional aftershocks**

Participant number 23 stated that emotional aftershock is one of my challenges of divorce. He said that the way my divorce happens to me made me to be shocked. To me, emotional aftershock accompanied my trauma. My emotional aftershock includes anger, and the self-pity such as panic or fear, irritability, and mood swings. Self-pity is a seductive emotion. You can become addicted to feeling sorry for yourself and ruin your whole life. *Panic* is a serious thing. When panic strikes, reason vanishes. This emotion leads you to do irrational things. Panic causes you to sell yourself short. Panic is fear in action. Panic always begins with a fear of some kind. *Fear* usually stems from insecurity, from not having a firm of the foundation of love and trust. Fear is never of God. Irritability or "to be irritable" comes from the word *irate*. An irritable person is one on the verge anger, one just waiting for a trigger to be pulled, or a button pushed, to explode. Irritability is the pre-anger stage. Mood swings are when one minute you think, "I can't stand it without him/her. I really miss that idiot." But the next minute, you think, "Who needs him? I'm better off without him/her." This state may lead into the "mixed feelings" stage or the "maintenance contact," where the person is willing to settle for limited contact rather than total separation. Mood swings usually are between highs and lows, while "mixed feelings" waver between love and hate. The "highs" are happiness and joy, while the "lows" are defeat and depression. Any of these emotional aftershocks may lead to something called "mental or nervous breakdowns."

#### **4.6.22 The challenge of grief/sorrow**

According to Adams (1976), the Greek word "*lupeo*" that is translated as either "grief" or "sorrow," is simply the general word for "pain." This grief is a painful sorrow that issues in an honest expression of one's feelings. If the ministry of the word requires a ministry of biblical hope, the pastor himself must possess such hope. To prevent grief from turning into despair, the pastor must share the Christian hope with the grief sufferer. He must remind grief sufferers that the Christian hope is firm. He said that "grief" is a life-shaking sorrow. Grief tears life to shreds, it shakes one from top to bottom. It pulls him/her loose; he/she comes apart at the seams. During grief, emotions

of anger, guilt and fear often are involved. According to Hagermeyer as (1986), in grief, the process of mourning the losses in a divorce is painful yet necessary. The complex and multiple losses must be faced and mourned. He identified the following losses: loss of the dream, loss of intimacy and companionship, loss of physical accessibility, loss of parenting role, loss of legal standing, loss of money and property, loss of community, and loss of attachment. Each of these losses calls for courage to grieve and move on. The losses may not all occur separately and not necessarily in the order given. Psychologist Viorst (2003) indicates that grief is a thing that we experience following the loss of a loved one. As Philip Culbertson (2000) rightly points out, “We grieve whenever our equilibrium is upset and our customary coping mechanisms are thrown out of kilter.” Robertson (1987) emphasizes that grief is the depressing sorrow or pain caused by the loss of a loved one. Bransby (2002) states that a person tends to feel that he/she is alone in his/her grief. He/she thinks no one has ever grieved or was as sad as he/she is.

During the interview with participant number 13, she stated that as a divorcee who was grieving,

*“I often feel isolated or lonely in my grief. After the loss of a husband through divorce, social and support from others decrease. I felt more pain and sadness. My friend didn’t show any care.”*

What participant number 13 is saying is in line with what Ravhudzulo (2007) states, namely that when we first experience a great loss, we are launched into a mix of emotions. We feel surrounded by darkness and heavy waves of anguish. Comforting words are drowned out by howling winds of sorrow. We feel lonely and out of control as we are swept toward a new destination in life. Comfort is something we need in life. Take, for instance, is someone is in hospital suffering from the pain of cancer. If you were to ask such a person. “What is your comfort?” then he might answer that his friends have overwhelmed him with gifts and visits, or that he has the best doctors money can buy.

#### **4.6.23 The challenge of failing to see the way out of pain**

During interview, lack of pastoral care and counselling made participant number 2 to admit that there is no way of getting out of the pain caused by divorce. To her it was a serious challenge. She stated that: after being divorced by the father of my children, I admitted that there is no way of getting out of the pain, of coming back to the stage of recovery, but one divorcee in our community advised me

to regard being open as a way out. I asked the pastor to visit me, after explaining my pain to the pastor and got counselling from God's Word, I became better. Munroe (2003) indicates that openness is an honest desire to face the truth and deal with change. Openness allows you to begin making plans about the future, not spend hours reliving the pasts. Acceptance of what has happened and learning how to go on requires openness. What may help is the understanding that everyone goes through this experience to one degree or another in various ways. Participant number 12 stated that even,

*“...though I was divorced by a traditional healer what I did to get out of the pain is to pray and to read the Word of God. That is why I am still alive after this pain of divorce. As a divorcee, I believe and admit that there is life after divorce. But I first had to find my hope in God.”*

In Philippians 3:14, Paul told the Philippians that “I press toward the mark for prize of high calling of God in Jesus Christ’. He never said “I press on toward the next town or the next revival, or the next journey.” Those things were the result of his pressing on toward Jesus and His purpose of his life. As a divorcee,

*“...my eyes were on Jesus who is also my life purpose. By looking unto Jesus, I had to admit where I am. It was Jesus who helped through the trauma and to get my life back on track as an African divorcee.”*

#### **4.6.24 The challenge of forgiveness**

According to Francis (2013) withholding forgiveness from those who have disappointed and hurt us will ‘lock our spirit into’ its wounding. We cannot heal if we do not release the hurt to God. Steyn (2000) states that to forgive others and to receive forgiveness for one's own shortcomings/sin is important for divorcees struggling with a bad conscience. To get an opportunity to give and receive forgiveness can provide a sense of peace and harmony. The opposite might be the (perceived) inability to forgive those who have done wrong against a divorcee. Carrying around the associated pain, depression, bitterness, disappointment, anger, resentment and even hatred can be a heavy burden to an individual.

During interview, participant number 18, who was in a polygamous marriage, stated that

*“...it was very difficult for me to forgive the father of my 5 children after divorce. He used to abuse me with painful words, beat me in front of my children. After divorce, I became a Christian with a new nature, who was living with the fact that I had to forgive this man. My pain was more exacerbated by the jealousy that burns in my heart when I see him with his new lover. This became worse if I attend the same church service with him. I needed a great humility as a Christian. I told myself that no matter how great my pain was after being divorced, I will find peace and happiness if I follow God’s word of forgiving those who trespasses against us. 2 Corinthians 2: 1-11 teaches me that if I don’t forgive those who have caused me harm, Satan will take advantage of me. I don’t want to be ignorant of God’s Word of truth and wreck my life and my future. No matter how much my husband has wounded me; I do have to come to a place of being able to release forgiveness to him. I believed that, if I don’t, I will be the one who pays the highest price. I cannot afford to let my husband destroy me (because I can’t or won’t forgive) and therefore can’t heal from the original damage caused. I ended up forgiving the father of my five children, when he was sick I use to accompany him at the hospitals for treatment. When his condition was very critical to a stage where he should be admitted at the private hospitals, when his relatives approached me to help, I had to pay 61 000 for his treatment. When he died, I prepared his funeral with peace in my heart. But it was not easy to forgive the man who abused me a lot and beating me in front of my five children. I thank God for giving me that heart of forgiving. As a Christian woman in Africa, this became possible for me because Jesus bore the punishment of my guilt on the Cross on my behalf (John 3:16).”*

What participant number 16 has done is encouraged by Retief (2000) who says that while many people are able to settle their divorces amicably and live relatively tension-free lives, others are hurt so deeply and their feelings run so high that each meeting with the divorced spouse is filled with tension. How should a person treat the person who devastated his/her life? God calls Christians to lean to forgive. Adams (1973) points out in the Christian Counsellor’s Manual that the Scriptures do

not command us to forgive and forget, because we do not have ability to forget at will. Forgiveness is not like shock treatment that wipes out unpleasant memories of the past. For the Christian, forgiveness is a decision, not a feeling. We choose to grant forgiveness as God commands because he has forgiven us (Mt. 6:14-15). This does not mean that we forget all the hurt of the past. It simply means that, because we are Christians, we do not dwell on it or raise it with unconditional, just as Christ's forgiveness of us is unconditional. It is a decision we make without looking for or expecting a response from our partner. We must act with dignity, displaying the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ towards our ex-spouse, even if he or she continues to live as before. Collins (1980) points out how hard it is to shed the idea that we must pay for our sins in Christian counselling. We may feel, quite unconsciously, that our guilty spouse has not paid for their sins. Instead of leaving them to God, we try to take over the job of making them pay. Our unfriendliness, aggressive attitude and sarcasm are constant reminders of how repulsive they are to us. The better way is to take our hurts and memories to God and to leave them there. Our guilty spouse is accountable to God, who knows how to deal with them. Let us keep our Christian dignity and equilibrium and deal with them as we would any other human being-with respect. The indwelling Holy Spirit whom the Lord Jesus Christ has sent to be our Comforter and Friend gives us the strength to glorify God even in the hard things of life.

#### **4.6.25 The challenge of seeing the one who started with a divorce as an enemy**

During interview with participant number 24, he indicated that

*“...after being divorced by my wife, I started to see my wife as my enemy who wasted my time by getting into a marriage relationship with her”.*

#### **4.6.26 The challenge of walking wounded**

According to Murren (1999), some people who come to our churches may be struggling with wounds experienced during hurtful relationships in the past. He continues to say that people today are much more wounded. They suffer from relationship wounds (consider the high percentages of marriages that end in divorce). What Murren states was experienced by participant number 9, who said that,

*“...divorce left me walking and living wounded. I was expecting my church to become the healer of my wound, unfortunately my local church failed to become a wounded healer”.*

## **4.7 Spiritual challenges**

### **4.7.1 The challenge of leadership positions**

According to Gola (1992), abuse in the church is a very serious matter. However, because the church in general does not acknowledge that divorce is not a sin in itself, the leadership of the church unwittingly goes right on abusing God's kids who are divorced as if they are doing God's handiwork — "keeping the church clean." We will teach and train anyone in leadership the truth about divorce who asks. During interview with participant number 4, he indicated that he was not comfortable because he is not allowed to occupy leadership position in the church. He also indicated that during leadership election meetings at the church, it was difficult for the church members to elect me as a divorcee to occupy a leadership position in the men's committee. He said that in his church, after remarriage with another wife,

*“...when I was elected as chairperson of the men's committee, but those men who know my previous marriage that die, they failed to give me support as a chairperson, so that they will finally see me as a failure. When I invited members of the committee to attend meeting, they didn't attend. I ended-up resigning from that church committee. I thought that God gave me an opportunity to serve in one of the key (leadership) positions in the RCSA so that I can exercise my gifts in serving the Lord.”*

Participant number 25 stated that,

*“...when I wanted to be in a leadership church position, I was told that one has to be married in order to be a good leader, because one has to lead by example.” I became very disappointed, because before divorce I was playing key roles in the church. I am a born again believer, filled with the Holy Spirit; and submitting to the teaching of my Lord Jesus Christ; and following the leading of the Holy Spirit;*

*qualifies to take a leadership position I aspires. But I was not allowed to occupy a leadership position.”*

Participant number 29 indicated that other church doctrines do not allow incomplete family members to be in leadership positions. One has to remain married to be a good leader because one has to lead by example.

Participant number 1 stated that,

*“...it depends on the maturity of the congregation, and the quality of leadership detected on the divorcees. Many divorcees have outstanding leadership abilities and qualities. Some of these divorcees were already playing key roles in the church before they lost their marriage partners through divorce.” Another participant expressed it in this way: divorce is painful, it touches my faith in God.”*

#### **4.7.2 The challenge of religious commitment**

The participant number 2 indicated that, after my divorce, if given good support in the local church,

*“I would tend to be more committed both spiritually and financially than my married counter parts. I attend prayer meetings and conferences more frequently than those men and women who are in marriages. As a divorcee, I support the church financially and in kind better than my counter parts. I also display my skills and talents, and I am more hospitable than married ones.”*

#### **4.7.3 The challenge of attending family conferences**

Participant number 28 indicated that,

*“...in one of the family conference that I have attended as a divorcee, I heard some pastor’s wives saying that they have some fears that female divorcees may break their families and cause disorders in the congregation. I regard that statement as a curse. I was very miserable. I love the Lord but I am battling from within as to whether I can leave my church or stay away from other church services because I am hurting very badly by the way I’m treated.”*

#### **4.7.4 The challenge of not attending church services when the church is having Holy Communion**

Participant number 16 indicated that when church members eat Holy Communion

*“I usually don’t go to church; because of I am still under church discipline that is caused by divorce. What make me not to attend these church services is that this discipline is taking a very long time, and the church is not helping me. During these services, church elders always move me to sit with Sunday-school children, to sit where my children are. The church is not working my discipline. It took six years now. I feel like I am a visitor in the church, the way the church is treating me is totally wrong, I feel like I am in prison, I am no longer enjoying church services, I feel like the church threw me away. This church is not accepting me, but they want my tithing. I am thinking about to leave this church and go to an alternative church that will not kill my spiritual life”.*

#### **4.7.5 The challenge of church support**

When divorce tragedy is happening in an unexpected time, reactions of church members are different. Churches members react differently after finding out that one who is closed to them is divorced. The research findings in this study show that reaction to divorcees varies from one person to another.

During the interview, participant number 1 indicated that “I saw that being trusted by church members is reduced.”

Participant number 3 stated that,

*“The church pastor did not visit me to cool down my situation. What disappointed me from the church leadership; my children and I were totally sidelined by church pastors. I was treated as a second class Christian. I got support from the people who are not church members. When my husband died, I was blamed by church members and relatives that I am the one who had killed my husband. The stigma of divorce is very painful. My parents were no longer on my side. A certain pastor from another church who*

*was trying to give me pastoral support was blamed by my pastors that he is in love with me. My divorce was all over even in the newspaper. Divorcees are also regarded as people who failed in life. I was discouraged by the way I was treated by the church. I decided to leave the church and sit at home until I find another church.”*

Participant number 4 indicated that:

*“Being divorced by a marriage partner and life partner brings serious challenges to the remaining partner. In her life after divorce, she points out that: I was shocked and couldn’t believe it and it felt like I was dreaming and I threw myself on the ground and cried uncontrollably. What worried me more was that when I received the divorce news, in my church there was no person to comfort me.”*

The research findings show that many participants received negative support from the church members, few of them received positive support after being divorced by their marriage partners. This is demonstrated by the participants who were interviewed:

Participant number 5 stated that

*“...after my husband divorced me, I felt depressed when some church members even those who are in the chair of leadership were gossiping about me. Many of them never visited me in my home to see how I am struggling in life. Few church members supported me and pray with me when they visited me.”*

Participant number 6 told the researcher that *“I was not visited by the pastor.”*

Participant number 8 who was interviewed points out, that,

*“I was faced with serious challenges concerning the way pastor failed to care and counsel me. I was usually isolated; my pastor did not give me the support that I was waiting for. Some church leadership didn’t treat me well.”*

What they did is only to come and verify if it is true, but they did not support. They did not come to help, but they only wanted to know, so that they can go and tell other people.

*“As a divorcee, indeed I had serious problems in the way my pastor is trying to answer my challenges. During my time of divorce, my pastor was not supportive, what he did is to gossip about my pain. In one of the church family conference, pastors’ wives were highly suspicious of female divorcees, accusing us of having affairs with their husbands (pastors). I personally no longer attend family conference because of this accusation to me and my colleagues who are divorcees. After preaching, one of the pastor’s wife said that it is better for us as pastor’s wives to accompany our husbands in times of visiting divorcees because of we are afraid that they will take our husbands. For me that statement was a curse. I was embarrassed.”*

Responding to these allegations, participant number 21 indicated that these accusations really do exist. He gave several examples where divorcees were accused of being trapped with pastors into immorality. He continued:

*“These divorcees made some pastors to fall into sexual trap with church pastors. While pastors are counselling them, some divorcees made some of the pastors to lose control. This challenge is very critical and caused some pastors wives to have a lot of mistrust upon pastors, and as such, it affects the progress of the church. Because of this, even pastors marriages ends in divorce.”*

Participant number 13 put things in this way:

*“To many believers being a divorcee is like when a person is having a leprosy disease. Believers didn’t accept me. When I led a song in the church, church members were always not supporting me, but if a song comes from the one who is married, they supported that person. When I wanted to sit with others in the same bench, some used to move to other bench. They didn’t want to be touched by me; there were not giving each other a hand of friendship. They regarded me as a person who has done a very big sin which is unforgivable. As I am speaking, today I don’t have friends. I fear to be open to people because people do not accept me.”*

Participant number 15 indicated that divorce leave me deeply wounded, physically, psychologically and spiritually.

*“I was strongly waiting for the church to come with some ways that will ensure strong support for me as a divorcee. The trauma that follows sudden my divorce leave me so vulnerable and miserable that I really need support from my fellow Christians who understand my situation, especially my church pastor. I complained that very often I was left alone or with people who don’t care my painful present situation. My suggestion is that if pastoral care and counselling is properly followed, we divorcees can cope with life in spite of our challenges.”*

In an interview that was held at the home of participant number 28, he indicated that,

*“...the way I am treated in the church is like the church is not the home of the saints. Is like there is no grace of God in the church. The way my church is treating me, I don’t feel loved and accepted in the house of God, I am not enjoying church. I am not loved. The leadership failed to support my gifts in the church activities such home cells, prayer meetings, leading Bible study groups, because I was not trusted. Things are not going well for us as divorcees in the church.”*

Participant number 1 indicated that,

*“I am not getting support and comfort from my friends in the church who used to come and visit me.”*

He pointed out that:

*“Since the divorce of my wife, I am now staying alone because my wife has divorced me. I am not getting support my friends and relatives who were sometimes use to visit me when I was still having marriage.”*

Participant number 2 mentioned that

*“...after divorce of my husband, most of the relatives and friends from the church no longer visited me to give support in order to cope with this painful situation.*

*She states that: I didn't receive support from my relatives and church friends after the pain of divorce that was caused by my husband, most of my friends and relatives no longer visited me to offer care and counselling support. They failed to help me to become strong and to cope with the pain of losing my husband through divorce. My friends and relatives didn't play the role of supporting me in this difficult time."*

Participant number 3 pointed out that,

*"...although it is difficult for her to accept being divorced by her husband; she is putting her faith in God who is always supporting her. This is how she puts it: After my husband divorced me, I felt humiliated and isolated when some of my church members told me that I was abusing my husband that is why he decided to divorce me. After divorce, my relatives have never visited me in my home to see how I am coping. As a divorcee, I also discovered that my relatives have also deserted me because of the rumour that has spread in my village that I was abusing my husband that is why he divorced me."*

Participant number 23 complained that,

*"...the way in which I failed to receive treatment and support from the church after divorce pain made me to feel like being a member of a church is a curse. She indicated that things became worse more especially when I expected a pastor to visit me and he didn't."*

During interview, participant number 6 (a young divorcee) indicated that,

*"...it was difficult for me to cope well in the church. Most church members accused me of immorality; they were judgmental, rather than sympathetic and accommodative to me. I was not valued as a church member. I know God values me as a divorcee who submits to His will. So the church didn't show love to me."*

Participant number 11 stated that I

*“...was not faithful because I choose to be like that. But I was driven to do so because of frustration and lack of proper support. I wanted to be a wonderful asset in the church, but I was not supported as a divorcee.”*

This was also confirmed by participant number 19, who said that,

*“After my wife divorced me, church members did not come to my home, I told the church pastors, but they failed to come to counsel me. Because of a lack of support my physical body and mind affected, and no one came to heal my heart and my soul. This is confirmed by the following statements: It was difficult for me to accept that my body and mind are affected by my divorce situation. I was expecting church members and church pastors to come to visit me for healing process, but I see nothing. Lack of pastoral care and pastoral counselling by the church made me not to get physical healing, emotional healing, and the trauma that developed in my thinking.”*

Participant number 7 also experienced a very big challenge in her life after divorce. Her challenges are pastors did not visit her. The church saw her as a member of a Christian Church who is struggling. She says,

*“After being divorced by the father of my children, the church added a pain in my life; the church didn't treat me as one of the church members. I decided to go to other churches that can heal my soul.”*

During interview, Participant number 24 reveals to the researcher,

*“...that the attitude of the church towards divorcees is killing churches and community by not accepting and not forgiving divorcees. I blame my pastor and his wife that they contribute to my being neglected. I am worried about the way the church is treating me.”*

Another participant expressed it in this way:

*“Believers do not want to associate themselves with me. Sometimes, a preacher or lay preacher attempted to include my divorce in his preaching sermon. After divorce, I failed to get church support, church members did not come to me, and even pastors did not come to me. Instead of coming to me, after divorce they always call me Mbuyavhuhadzi; the one who returned from Marriage’ For me it was a curse.”*

Another participant expressed it in this way:

*“In the church, I was committed. But now because of being a divorcee, I am rejected, and these things caused me to still see myself as a failure.”*

Participant number 29 reports that,

*“...when my husband divorced me, children didn’t accept what happened, they started crying uncontrollably. She points out that: Pastor’s failed to come and bring counselling to me and to my children. I didn’t receive any comfort and support in time of pain.”*

Participant number 2 indicated that in the church,

*“...because of I am a divorcee, many church members do not give me a hand of friendship, and they refuse to greet me with a hand of friendship.”*

According to Retief (2000), if the church has no road to healing and acceptance of a person’s new circumstances and has no support group for people who are facing particular difficulties; people should consider starting such groups themselves. You probably know others facing the same hurt and challenges that are also looking for help. As you think about starting such fellowship, bear two things in mind: Your fellowship must be centred on the Bible; you need to know what God is saying to you. You have probably had enough of the advice of friends and family. Searching the Scripture together will provide comfort and guidance. As you open your home and your heart, you will find yourself ministering to the needs of others. While it is good to draw on your own experience, you will find the need to know more than that. Seek training in counselling others. Shop around for

training courses, read books, make enquiries. God may use your divorce to launch you into a ministry that will change your life and bless countless others.

#### **4.7.6 The challenge of a lack of Biblical knowledge about divorce**

Divorcees experience frustration because of a lack of knowledge about divorce in the churches. One divorcee stated that:

*“It is like church members do not know the Word of God and the love of Jesus to sinners.”*

Some church members, even though they were told about the unconditional love of God to all people, still cannot believe it and they fear being associated themselves with divorcees. Pastors and their followers are not following God’s love to people who are in painful situation. They should be educated about this, but also taught what to do in a situation of divorcees (Johnson, 1997). Lack of knowledge about the divorce causes church members to have false conceptions about the divorce. Some of the participants indicated that they are associated with sex-workers, i.e. “prostitutes.” Many church members believe that if someone is divorced, he or she has been a prostitute. This is evidenced by the following quotations:

*“So you just hear others saying we are sex workers, that is why we failed in marriages”. “They usually tell me that I was divorced by my husband because I have terminated a pregnancy that I got outside marriage.”*

It is true that many church members think that divorce is a punishment from God for one’s behaviour. That belief is dangerous to our church communities because we cannot fight with the challenges of divorcees with misconceptions. It is very painful and frustrating to divorcees to know that God is punishing you.

#### **4.7.7 The challenge of spiritual devastation**

Retief (2000) stated that most serious of all, however, divorce could be spiritually devastating for the Christian. Caught up in one of life’s most dreaded dramas, you are forced to draw on all available spiritual resources. You may often have had to comfort others in similar circumstances, but not you

have to comfort yourself. Prayers to God for his intervention remain unanswered. God seems to be so far away that you wonder if he was ever there in the first place. Apart from everything else that has to be endured, there is a cascade of feelings of guilt, failure and shame, the suspicion that God has something against you, and the unanswered question: what have I done to deserve this?

Added to this may be the feeling that the church disapproves of divorce and that, without understanding how, you have failed spiritually. You feel stigmatized, as if you can never be trusted again. Bitterness, hurt and resentment make you withdraw. You feel numb inside and, even though you may have been a committed Christian for many years, you act in uncharacteristic ways. You may hate yourself for this, but in your loneliness, instead of finding the spiritual help you always thought would be there, you might decide to have a fling. No wonder the bottom line is: God hates divorce. Participant number 26 put it in this way:

*“After being divorced by my husband I felt useless in the church, I perceived myself like a parcel which just placed in the church.”*

#### **4.7.8 The challenge of having a wounded spirit**

Francis (2013), when talking about wounded spirit, indicates that many people are wounded in their marriage relationships. Even divorcees are carrying a wounded spirit. They are afflicted by a wounded spirit they are unable to step out boldly to obey the Holy Spirit. The subject of a wounded spirit is an important one, as it affects so many divorcees. Participant number 21 indicated that,

“I endured all kinds of physical affliction, but when my spirit is wounded I has been hurt and damaged in my spirit, it was very painful. My wounded spirit comes as a result of a re-action to negative words, events, actions, or a violation of my person or rights a re-action that crushes me, knocks me down and from which I cannot seem to rise. Divorce crushes an area of my life and my spirit. I have failed to heal myself of a wounded spirit. I needed someone else to release it in positive pastoral care and counselling and believing prayer.”

#### **4.7.9 The challenges of looking for a security blanket**

Research findings revealed that there are some divorcees who were legally divorced but are still checking on one another for security reason. According to Munroe (2003), these divorcees have been

apart for months, and yet emotionally, the cords are still there. They need to maintain contact. Some people become good friends after a divorce. Suddenly, the other person does not look so bad. This was confirmed by participant number 8, who stated the following:

*“We could not stand each other while we were in marriage. Yet, now we have lunch together, we go for drives together; we go to parties at friends’ house. When I did these behaviours I wanted to have a security blanket to cushion and comfort me from the emotional trauma. I did this because I did not get pastoral care and counselling support from church pastors who could come and show me that my security is in Christ and the Word of God.”*

#### **4.7.10 The challenge of a lack of fellowship in the church**

The researcher was privileged to interview participant number 15. During the interview he stated that the lack of fellowship in the church is a challenge, he said,

*“I remember words of the Bible from Psalm 133: “How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron’ beard, down upon the collar of his robes. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore. I was not given fellowship in the church. I expected the church to give me warm relationship and fellowship and communion with God and with one another through care and counselling. The world of unfair discrimination in the church discouraged me a lot. No love, forgiveness and acceptance were given to me as a way of showing support. I don’t praise and worshipping God freely. I don’t see the spirit of peace and harmony in this church. By the way I was treated I was in tears.”*

#### **4.7.11 The challenge of a lack of love and acceptance in the church**

During the interview with participant Number 15, she stated that:

*“The church is a wonderful family and a home for the saints. But the church is failing to care and counsel me and to make me feel loved and accepted in the house*

*of God. I know Jesus is the first one on earth who to treat all human beings equally and to teach all people to respect and love one another.”*

What participant number 15 said was confirmed by Ramatla (2006), who states that divorcees may ask question about spiritual matters and look for religious institution to support them in their challenges. They will find great consolation and new vitality when they discover a spiritual belief that provides them with love, support and acceptance. Religious leaders and church organizations can provide moral, physical and spiritual support to divorcees. Spiritual leaders should be available for divorcees, when they need counselling, they should be ready with positive encouragement and the messages of hope. Divorcees should never be judged. With love and care, the spiritual institutions must lift these people up and show them that they can overcome fear, despair, and depression and make a contribution to church society.

#### **4.7.12 The challenge of spiritual maturity**

During interview with participant number 16, she stated that,

*“...after being divorced by my husband, spiritually I didn't not grow, my faith wanted to die. My life after divorce was very tough, many people rejected me, even those who were family friends in times of my marriage; they ran away from my life, they did not want to associate themselves with me, and they saw me as a dirty person. I experienced 90% of the people who throw away their support from me. That situation also affected my relationship with God and my spiritual maturity. It was very difficult for me to grow spiritually. I was hurt. Many people stop taking care of me and of my children. As a human being I also thought even God have turned His face against me. But I protect my faith from the hands of Satan, I put my faith in God, I add my hours of prayers. Prayers and God's word were my pillars. I went back to school and register as a student at the University so that I could keep myself busy by studies. I also discovered my potential and strength.”*

Retief (2000) who stated that the only way to cope with your own changing emotions, once you have accepted Christ and are facing the reality of a lost family, is to make sure that your relationship with God is real and growing confirmed this. Find a church of love that will help you, where God's Word

is expounded faithfully and systematically. Approach Christian people and make new friends among them. Seek help to read the Bible in a way that is meaningful. Discover the true meaning of prayer. Get involved in Christian activity and share your faith with others. Be sincere and sensitive and concentrate on your spiritual growth and development. According to Munroe (2003), following divorce there are four things that could help a divorcee to mature spiritually; these four things must be restored to balance for you to get on with your life. Wisdom: When you have been hurt, do not allow your mind to turn off. Proverbs 16:9 says to make your plans and God will work out your steps. Do not sit and die. Come up with another plan. To come up with a plan, you have to think. You also need to keep growing spiritually, as well as physically. Stature: However, many people stop taking care of the body in the aftermath of a divorce. Because they lose interest in food and do not eat properly, they lose energy. They failed to handle emotional things. During interview, participant number 11 stated that the way his wife divorced him was very shocking. He came from work, and when he arrived home, he found a letter of divorce on the table. He said,

*“At that time, I was very disappointed. I even did not want to eat food. I lost interest in food. What I did is only drinking a lot of water to gain energy. But after few days I started eating food to prevent weaknesses of my body. Favour with God: Times of trouble certainly are times to find favour with God, of all times! Proverbs 3:5 says to trust God with all your heart. That chapter also reminds us not to trust our own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him; He shall direct your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil. It shall be health to your navel, and marrow to your bones (Proverbs 3:6-8). Favour with People: Jesus liked people. He mingled with all types of people from all walks of life. He did not isolate Himself. The only time He went aside was to have private talks with the Father. When you are hurting, check your social thermometer. However, be selective about those with whom you spend time. Jesus did not spend a lot of time with the religious leaders of His day, who operated in hypocrisy and legalism. As a divorcee, make sure people you are around are open and accepting people themselves, able to reach out in love. The Golden Rule will help you here. Give out to others in trouble what you need.”*

#### 4.7.13 The challenge of negative support from the church pastor

According to Maswanganyi (1990), the parenting challenges of divorcees need to be addressed and discussed, in counselling, churches should not ignore encouraging all single parents in Africa, it must give them hope. Although some participants received positive support from their pastors, many of them in the RCSA in the Vhembe District received negative support and this is confirmed by the following words: Participant number 28 experienced negative supports from her pastor after being divorced by her husband who was a church leader and after divorce he passed away. This is how she puts it:

*“When my pastor find out that I was divorced by my husband who after divorce passed away, he started accusing me of causing the death of my husband, he indicated to me that he do not want to associate himself with me. When I called him to come and help me and my children with church matters advices, he did not come to visit me for pastoral care and counselling. He never came to my home after divorce. He didn’t want to find out how I and my children cope. After I realize that my pastor did not care about relationship with God, I decided to join another church.”*

Participant number 20 also tells of a lack of support from her pastor.

*“I was having a challenge of poverty after divorce. I wanted pastors to come and visit me for giving care and support. I felt that I was not receiving the same support that other people who are educated in the church are given by pastor. She puts it this way: When my husband divorced me, I became totally poor because I was not educated and I was not working. I informed my pastor and he failed to come to support me through counselling. I only see my pastor on Sunday; sometime I go to the church without eating food. I found out that my pastor always pay visits to those church members who are educated and who are working.”*

#### **4.7.14 The challenge of being unable to focus on God**

Participant number 18 stated that after my husband divorced me I experienced a challenge of loosing focus on God.

*“I thought that because church members are not accepting and undermining me, and no longer regards me as important person in the church, I lost focus on God. I looked at my circumstance; I was unable to look at God as an Answer. I didn’t see Jesus as my foundation, which can help me to cope with life after divorce. I focused on myself and how I feel. When I see that I was not supported by church community and relatives, I focused on myself. Self-focus keeps me from the healing I need. I did not focus on God; I focused on the challenges of living alone as a divorcee who is a mother of three children.”*

#### **4.7.15 The challenge of regarding oneself as inferior Christian**

During interview with a male divorcee who is participant number 22, he said

*“I try my utmost best not to regard myself as inferior Christian. I hold my head high and prove to the world and the church that a divorcee is no less of a person because he is divorced. He is not insignificant. I regard myself as a complete person in Christ; even though I am struggling to raise my motherless children.” He concluded: “I’m so determined to walk in the joy of the Lord, and I pursue this joy in spite of the surrounding circumstances. The more I seek for my contentment in Jesus, in spite of my status as a divorcee, the more real joy I experience.” Christ alone would be enough for me.” It is high time the church realizes that I am not a second-class citizen of the Kingdom; I am a child of God whom God called. I stopped regarding myself as a defeated and a failure person.”*

Participant number 21 indicated that his divorce challenges affects people in the church. “My family was a role model. In my family, we use to celebrate every birthday in the presence of church members. Church members were affected a lot.”

#### **4.7.16 The challenge of visiting a traditional healer to cure the soul**

Participant number 2 indicated that after divorce I went to see an African traditional healer or doctor who can able to cure my soul. Before doing that, I was looking for pastoral care and counselling from the church members or church pastors, but because no one visited me I decided to visit African traditional healer “*Vho-maine vha Afurika.*”

#### **4.7.17 The challenge of seeing yourself as a failure**

According to Ravhudzulo (2007), the spirit of failure makes the individual lose courage to perform his/her duties in life. This spirit tells the person that you have failed and you are hopeless. The person develops anger, hatred, revenge, hostility, etc. Spirit of failure brings discouragement. It prevents the individuals from prospering in all their activities, e.g. sports, education, family matters, work situations and church activities. To the children of God, the spirit make them no longer committed, energetic like the time they received Christ as their personal saviour. They lose the spirit of going to church and attend all church activities (church services, conferences), praying and reading the word regularly. If they are registered students, the spirit make them lose courage to study, they may drop studies. Divorcees register and end up not doing assignments and writing examinations. Literally, they fail all the subjects. Workers become incompetent and their work leaves much to be desired.

This was experienced by participant number 16 who indicated to the researcher that

*“...after the pain of being divorced by his wife, he dropped his Doctoral studies at one of the South African University. What made him to drop his studies is because seeing him as a total failure in life.”*

Participant number 13 is a female divorcee. Because of what she experienced in life, she told the researcher that:

*“If I am a manager at workplace and find that one is divorced, I can give him/her a leave to cool down because I know the pain of divorce, and I know that he/she cannot perform well at work, not because of he/she cannot, but because of the situation he/she is going through.”*

## 4.8 Sexual challenges

### 4.8.1 The challenge of being accused sexual immorality

Francis (2013), when talking about sexual immorality after divorce, stated that something has happened in their lives that have knocked them back and from which they have been unable to rise above, or get totally free from. **Sexual immorality affects every part of their being: spiritual, physical, emotional, our conscience and our mentality.**

During the interview, participant number 3 indicated that,

*“...church members regard me as person of immorality. Even my church pastor was also suspicious of my morality. For instance, a certain church pastor who was very suspicious of me as a divorcee saying that I was suddenly fell in love with another member of the church. When I got promotion at work, I was told that I obtained that promotion not because of my performance, but through sexual intercourse. For me, I regard that statement as a curse. What made the situation more unbearable and painful to me is that church members wanted me to live alone.*

She later added that pastors “wives usually say that they don’t trust divorcees.”

Some pastors indicate that the situation is made worse because there are men who take advantage of female divorcees, most of them with the intention of robbing them of the property left by their husbands. Some participants interviewed indicated that pastors as people who suddenly commit adultery shortly after divorce regard most of the divorcees.

### 4.8.2 The challenge of a loss of interest in sex

According to Robertson (1987), after divorce, discouragement can cause loss of appetite. Participant number 27 indicated that

*“I was discourage by my husband who gave me 6 children, after he divorced me he told me that in bedroom I am not good, I am not sweet, I am like water, I am*

*ugly. Those painful words from the mouth of my divorced husband made me to lose interest in sex and not to think to enter into another marriage; I concluded that I am not sweet. I will never please any man with my body. I began to think that something is wrong with me. I was very depressed”.*

Participant number 24 put it in this way:

*“I lost interest in sex. I’ve lost even interest and touch because of what happened before. Personally I lost interest.”*

#### **4.8.3 The challenge of sexual identity**

During interview with participant number 20, he indicated that:

*“After divorce, I had a fear of remarrying. I am no longer interested in marrying a wife.*

According to Redding (2012), sexual identity and relating sexually as a single person are issues raised by the divorce process. It is often a period of initial disinterest. Sometimes hypersexual activity occurs as a way or re-establishing a sense of worth as a man or woman, or a way of coping with loneliness, or seeking revenge. The challenge is to reconcile one’s belief and values with the single lifestyle.

#### **4.8.4 The challenge of sexual pressure**

Retief (2000) indicates that sex is a very powerful human drive. God has given it to us for our enjoyment and happiness. Because of its unique dynamic, it is given within the framework of a meaningful relationship, in the commitment of marriage. To take sex out of God-given boundaries and safeguards is to let loose one of the most powerful and destructive forces you will ever know. The irony is that sex is intended for our good. During an interview with participant number 5, she indicated that

*“I still have the feeling of living and staying with a husband. I like to have a man, but which man will I take. For me, that is a serious challenge, because I am not enjoying living alone. Is my prayer that one day I will have a man. I don’t know*

*how to explain sexual; it is a very serious pressure. I experienced it before marriage while I was still in marriage, while was still sleeping with a husband. I knew that I have a man, I am in marriage; while I was still in marriage, when I went to sleep and my husband came, he didn't care of me. I used to tolerate that serious pain. After divorce for me sex pressure was worse. As I am speaking I am still struggling. I lived in that pain of sex years and years while I was in marriage. Sexual pressure was worse while I was still having a husband whom I sleep with. What could I say, as a divorcee now I think it is better because I don't have a man."*

Participant number 21 stated that,

*"...as a divorcee who was divorced by a husband, in the beginning of divorce, because of the anger, sex never came to head, but as life goes on, she said, I started to feel sexual pressure. Sexual pressure was a very big challenge as a person who entered into marriage with this man for sex. As divorcee who is working, I was having sexual pressures at work, the irritation of coping with well-meaning matchmakers, uncertainty about how to behave with opposite sex. When my husband divorced me, I told myself that I will never enter into marriage with anyone else, but because of there is sexual pressure everywhere I go, I entered into a remarriage with the man I love. That is why I am a mother of triplets who were born in this new marriage. I glorify the name of God for comforting me with this new family where everything is going well."*

Participant number 16 put it in this way

*"The life after divorce is difficult, because the challenge of sex is there. What I see after divorce, spent 4-5 years without having sexual intercourse with a man. I think being divorced traumatized me a lot. After divorce, I decided not to get into sexual intercourse. While I was still in my marriage, that situation of not having sex while sleeping with a husband in the same bed, inside one blanket, is like it traumatized me so that I cannot able to get a new man."*

Participant number 15 put it in this way

*“My sexual pressure was too much. After divorce, I used to do masturbation as a way of relieving my sex desire. I experienced that this thing is very painful, because I felt that in the moment of ejaculation without a wife, it was so painful. Is not a good habit. This made me to think of getting into another marriage.”*  
Participant number 16 put in this way *“Because of a lack of church support, I ended up having affair with somebody else’s wife.”*

According to Retief (2000), many women and men continue to sleep with their ex-partners, ex-husbands or ex-wives. Retief (2000) emphasizes that a divorce does not automatically switch our sexual desires off. They are still very much alive, and for most divorcees, they constitute an enormous problem. As a result, many divorced people continue to sleep together or engage in other sexual relationships. Retief (2000) continues to say that “sexual pressure at work, the irritation of coping with well-meaning matchmakers, uncertainty about how to behave with the opposite sex and, in some circles, the social prejudice against singles raise an important question: how do I respond as a single person? You may be single through no choice of your own, and may feel unsure as to how to respond in certain circumstances.”

Participant number 14 put things in this way,

*“After divorce, I continued to have sexual intercourse with many men; I didn’t have sexual pressure. It was not easy for me to abstain from sex.”*

Participant number 16 expressed it in this way:

*“I am divorced, but as an African man I have a wife whom I sleep with, because I feel that I cannot cope without a wife.”*

Participant number 21 put things in this way

*“The issue of sex contributed a lot to the fall of my marriage. I don’t know why my wife saw things in that way of not taking sex seriously. She used to give me sex once a week, or once after two weeks, or once after three weeks. In the night when*

*we went to sleep in one bed, she used to sleep with her own blanket, and mine I have my own. Sexual pressure was there before divorce. After divorce, I felt that I cannot cope being alone, I still felt a very serious sexual pressure, that is why I decided to get into another marriage “remarriage”.*

#### **4.8.5 The challenge of not practicing sex outside marriage, especially with your former spouse**

Participant number 16 indicated that,

*“...it is difficult for him not to practice sex outside marriage; he has a wife that satisfies him sexually. But he feels guilty because of knowing the biblical truth that sex is to done in the marriage. He said that sex outside marriage confuses three areas of my life – my status, my children and my new relationship.”*

Retief (2000), who says that if you practice sex outside marriage, especially with your former spouse, your status is confused because although you are divorced, the break is not final, confirmed what participant number 16 stated. Feelings of guilt are created and perpetuated so that you feel your ex-spouse is still your partner and you have no chance of adapting to your new situation. Your children may have lived through a traumatic time. He said, sex for you as a divorcee confuses your situation and shuts the door on any meaningful new relationships. Retief (2000) states that “A post-divorce sexual relationship with the marriage partner is often accompanied by uncertainty and depression because of the instinctive feeling that something is wrong. Even if the divorce is not yet final, it is foolish to allow the privileges of marriage without the responsibilities.”

### **4.9 Children’s challenges**

#### **4.9.1 The challenge of fighting for children**

Participant number 11 stated that:

*“There was a fight between the two of us; we were fighting for the children. Each of us wants to have children and sometimes when you want the favour of children*

*you can talk bad things about another parent or buy things for children. Saying bad things about marriage partner with children is a very serious matter.”*

Another participant expressed it in this way:

*“She left the responsibilities of taking care of children with me. And for me, financially it is difficult.”*

Another participant expressed it in this way:

*“I and my wife were fighting for the children. My wife used children as instruments of revenge.”*

Retief (2000), who said that after divorce some divorcees used their children as instruments of revenge, confirms this. Unfortunately, these children have been traumatized by the pre-divorce conflict, the divorce itself and the immediate aftermath. They do not need to be used as a weapon to get at the other parent, or to spy when they go to their former spouse’s home. Instead of encouraging children to take sides, a divorcee must share his/her burdens with an adult friend.

#### **4.9.2 The challenge of children who needs both father and mother**

During interview with participant number 26, she indicated to the researcher that

*“After divorce the fact that you have children together, you cannot own the child alone, the child needs both of you; they will force you to share parenting on them, you will also be forced to share the child. To give somebody who hurts you a child Is not easy, but is difficult”.*

#### **4.9.3 The challenge of loss of potential of the children of divorcees**

Children of divorcees experience sadness and pain when they realize that their father and mother have lost their potential because of divorce. Such potential includes education and employment. They even compare their divorced parents with others of the same age. This statement is evidenced as follows:

*“When my son looks at me, he feels hurt. When he sees the pain that I am going through and when he look at others of my age who are having healthy families, and listen some children calling their mam and dad, it disappoint him. This is very painful. I had hoped that one day he will work and be able to take care of me. Unfortunately this does not look like he will recover and be able to go to school again” (he looks very sad).*

In most of them their dreams and hopes for the future have been shattered by this divorce.

#### **4.9.4 The challenge of losing children**

According to Clinebell (1994), “divorce is one of the most widespread grief experiences. Divorce often happens early in the marriage when children are still at home, therefore affecting young children.” Participant number 15 stated that,

*“...my children went with my wife, even today I don’t know them, and they are living with their mother. The law encouraged that children must belong to the two of us, but from the side of the mother of my children it is very difficult for me to see my children.”*

Participant number 24 put it in this way:

*“I was not allowed to see my children.”*

Participant number 21 put things in this way:

*“As a husband who is over 60 years who has two daughters, a big challenge which is the first in my life is children. It is painful not to see your biological children who are growing. Before divorce, in the family I used to play with them, to eat with them, to travel with them, to pray and go to the church services with them. That is my first and very serious challenge.”*

#### 4.9.5 The challenge of child-rearing

According to Casey (1991), children of divorce are like other children in many ways. They like the same clothes, eat the same foods, play the same games, and have the same interests as other young people their age. Just because, through no choice of their own, they have experienced divorce and are living in a single parent home does not make them peculiar or strange. However, all children of divorce have special needs. Some of their needs relate to their divorce experience while others correspond to living in a single-parent home. Participant number 10 indicates that after divorce

*“I am acting as both male and female figure; as a father and a mother. The role of fatherhood and motherhood is in my hands as a divorcee. I am a mother of two girls. As I am speaking now, one of my girls is in prison, she is arrested. So a sense of direction, authority, norms and values as well as sound morals are lacking in my family. To make it clear, it is not a child’s play to raise children as a single parent. These are the challenges that I am facing as a divorcee and I need pastoral care and counselling.”*

When divorce happened, participant number 19 said that

*“I was shocked, trembling and couldn’t believe or understand what has happened in my life and I felt very disappointed because I came to this marriage for life, not for a short period. I didn’t expect that one day I will find myself raising children being alone. To tell the truth to raise a child alone is not a child-play, is a very big struggle.*

Participant number 13 put things in this way:

*“As a wife, to raise children is not easy while still having stress of I am a divorcee, even children also do have stress”*

Retief (2000) who says that a single parent is faced with the struggles of raising a child alone also supported this. Child-raising is no easy task at the best of times; without the regular support of a partner, you may feel that you will not manage. You may have the added burden of a malicious partner undoing in one weekend all you have been trying to achieve with the child during the week.

#### 4.9.6 The challenge of meeting the needs of the children

According to Maswanganyi (1990), all children have spiritual and intellectual needs. For that reason, they need training and teaching (Prov. 22:6) regarding social and family norms of behaviour, beliefs, customs and Christian values. Children need general education, career guidance and vocational education (1 Tim. 5:14), even Jesus learned carpentry as a trade from his father, Joseph. A child needs discipline (Prov. 13:14, 19:18, 22:15) as well as forgiveness. Maswanganyi (1990) indicates that children never choose to be born where they are born. If they make a mistake and sin, such as a teenage girl becoming understanding and a boy is impregnating a girl, they need sympathy, understanding, forgiveness and love with firmness. Parents should accept the responsibility of paying all the damages incurred by their teenagers and of making restitution with the offended parties concerned. A child who has sinned in such a way should not be made to feel that it is the end of life. A child should be given hope that he or she can still fulfil his or her life dreams. He or she should be made to feel that they are still loved; that their home and parents are the only ones in the world where they must feel wanted, welcomed, belong and are comforted.

Participant number 1 indicated to the researcher that,

*“To monitor the life of children daily, checking their church life, daily life, school work, and lifestyle.”*

During interview with participant number 2, she indicated that,

*“...when divorce came to me, when divorce came I was from retrenched; the custody of children was on my side, because the father of the children did not want to stay with children. By that time, I was a situation of being retrenched from my work. I was unable to provide fully for the family.”*

Participant number 16, who is a father of two girls, said that,

*“...my children are complete human beings; they have physical needs, such as food, clothing, shelter and health. They have emotional needs such as love, parental support, a desire for acceptance, praise and encouragement. They have spiritual and intellectual needs. They need training and teaching of social and*

*family norms of behaviour, beliefs, customs and Christian values. They need education, guidance. They need discipline. They make mistakes. They need my sympathy, understanding, forgiveness and love. As a divorcee, I am carrying the responsibility of paying for all school fees. It is not easy to raise a child without the help of a mother, I am struggling, and their mother is doing nothing.”*

Another participant expressed it in this way:

*“I am left with two little girls; they are still at primary education. As a father, I am experiencing difficulties in raising children being alone. Because of committing my total time with these children, some of the works I stopped, for example, my doctoral studies at the University. Everything in their lives must be done by me. Their mother is doing nothing since she is gone to another man. Their school fees, food, books are in my hands.*

Participant 21 still remember how the challenge of raising children alone after the divorce tragedy happened in her life is. She was struggling to meet their needs. She puts it this way:

*“When my husband forsakes me, my children did not respect me as their mother, one of them dropped school, has bad lifestyle, and is a drunkard and he was also arrested. As a divorced mother I concluded that the absent of father is the course of all these.”*

Participant number 26 put things in this way

*“Financially the other party will not willing to contribute too much. If you are staying with the child you will have to do more”.*

Munroe (2003), who said that the tragedy of the absent father is lack of respect, fear and irresponsibility, supported this. Because of this challenge some children of divorcees end up being poor, wayward children causing many problems in the community, a large per cent of convicts in the state prisons are from divorcees’ families. A high rate of teenage pregnancies, dropouts and rebellious children come from divorcee’s only families. Thieves, bully and violet kids full of hatred come from divorcee’s families. Fatherlessness and motherless is a major cause of school dropouts,

joblessness, drug addiction, and high failure rate. Children need someone to inspire them and this is the father and mother figure. According to Maswanganyi (2009), mother and father present a balanced illustration of an aspect of God, i.e. the nurturing and caring side of mum and the visionary, equipping, modelling and action side of dad.

#### **4.9.7 The challenge of informing children about the divorce**

During the interview with participant number 20, he indicated that

*“...it is not easy for me to inform my children of what happened between me and their mother. I didn't inform my children. I don't know where to start. My hope was on church pastor, but he failed to give me counselling services that could help children of the divorced parents to cope more effectively with the strains of divorce”.*

Van der Walt (1991) states that if you have children you will have to help them to overcome the divorce situation. A child can remember from his/her third or fourth year what happens to him/her and for the rest of his/her life he/she may either think of the divorce of parents. Do not take it for granted that your child is too small to realize what is going on. It is very important not to leave the children uninformed about the divorce situation. Explain to them that their biological mother or father is no longer your marriage partner.

#### **4.9.8 The challenge of children being confused**

During interview with participant number 14, she stated that,

*“What worries me is that how this thing is going to affect a child, this thing will confuse a child. A child calls that previous husband daddy, now I am in a new marriage he is now calling my new husband daddy.”*

Participant number 3 indicated that

*“...when I look at my children they no longer have an interest of marriage; they lose hope to God, relative, and to the church. Subconsciously they have been*

*disappointed. Their confidence has affected them a lot. They are confused. They were totally side-lined by church pastor.”*

Timothy (1990), who states that “Children from the divorce background have no frame of reference or at least a wrong frame of reference on which to build their own marriages, states what participant number 3 indicated. Many, if not all, marriage counsellors will confirm the statement that in a very large number of divorce cases, one or both of the divorcees come from the background of having divorced parents. Divorce creates divorce.

#### **4.9.9 The challenge of children becoming traumatized**

During a meeting with participant number 8, she indicated that

*“...what brought me a pain is that my children did see that in the family there is a problem, because they saw the way I was abused by their father. They were traumatized about the situation. They have heard all the words, and they see the way I was beaten and abused by their father.”*

What participant number 8 have said is confirmed by Timothy (1990), who states that “In South Africa, approximately 25 000 children are affected by divorce annually. The figure is most probably even higher. The number of children who are affected by divorce is growing every day. In the Black community it is estimated that 3 million children are roaming the streets and can be described as a “lost generation” where nothing or very little exists of true Christian family set-ups. When we start calculating the costs in society, commerce and industry, we can only say that divorce is also causing havoc in our country.

#### **4.9.10 The challenge of the surname of the children**

During the interview with participant number 14, she indicated to the researcher that,

*“As a mother, I have a challenge of my child who is always changing a surname when I move from one marriage to another marriage. The marriage that I am living with him is my third marriage. I see this as a serious challenge because my child who is growing is always asking me why he is no longer using that surname*

*of the previous man who divorced me. As mother this question is stressing me in this new marriage relationship.”*

#### **4.10 Domestic challenges**

##### **4.10.1 The challenge of new homemaking**

During an interview with participant number 18, she stated that after being divorced by my husband, who was abusing me,

*“I had to move from his house and searching for a new area where I had to start building a new house starting from the foundation to find a place to stay with my 5 children. There was a need to create a new home for myself and my children. God gave me that power and wisdom to can do that even though I was working as a part-time school-teacher, not as a permanent one. But it was not easy because I have to make sure that children are eating, are getting clothes, and are paying school fees. But I thank God for making me to build my new house. Having this new home after divorce offers me a wonderful opportunity to make a fresh start. I did not allow my hurt to stop my dream of having a new home.”*

Retief (2000) confirms what participant 18 said when he says that ‘the need to create a new home for yourself and your children offers a wonderful opportunity to make a fresh start. A divorcee must not let his/her hurt spill over into untidy surroundings. This will also intensify his/her feeling of being out of control. Being to express his/her personality in the way he/she furnishes his/her flat or house.

##### **4.10.2 The challenge of learning to do things you have never done before**

During interview with participant number 11, he stated that

*“...as a divorcee I had to learn to make washing, cooking and cleaning.”*

Retief (2000), who indicates that “As a single man you may have to learn to do things you have never done before – washing, cooking, and cleaning, confirms what he said. You will see all these as a challenge.

#### **4.10.3 The challenge of property**

Participant number 11 indicated that

*“...my wife, who started with divorce, took everything. Divorce came to me as a surprise. Because of taking everything she wanted me to live with nothing. I have experienced this in life. This brought to me a serious pain.”*

Participant number 13 expressed it in this way: *“my wife took everything”*

#### **4.10.4 The challenge of feeling rootless, and losing your marital status**

Craig (1983) states that in the first 2 years following the divorce fathers who no longer live with their children sometimes feel rootless, while mothers may complain of losing the status they had as married women. Participant number 4 indicated that “being divorced made me to feel rootless as a father. Divorce put me down in life. I concluded that I could not rise up and face the future with confidence. I was in a situation of hopelessness.

#### **4.10.5 The challenge of relatives**

Participant number 1 indicated to the researcher that

*“Relatives become divided. Some of the relative see things on their own, they fight each other.”*

During interview with participant number 21, he indicated to the researcher that

*“After divorce, both relatives were affected, from my side and from my wife’s side. You will realize that we are the African people, this marriage gave me relatives, but when marriage dies those relatives also affected, they become frustrated.”*

Participant number 26 put things in this way

*“Some members of the family, who are very close to the family living, do not accept divorce, they don’t understand you as a divorcee, they think you need to persevere the challenges. They will criticize you.”*

## 4.11 Social challenges

### 4.11.1 The challenge of lacking support from neighbours, friends and relatives

Retief (2000) states that divorce not only affects you and the children, but also a far wider circle of people. The grandparents are forced into an emotional crisis. Uncles and aunts on both sides of the family are affected. Friends, who do not want to take sides, are embarrassed and do not know how to relate to you. If you or your ex-spouse eventually remarries, a new set of grandparents, uncles and aunts further complicates social relationships. Participant number 17 indicated that after he was divorced by his wife, the elderly people who were the organizers of his wedding with this wife failed to give him support, they criticized him. Friends kept on saying he would see how difficult it is to live without a wife; they were no longer visiting him.

He puts it this way:

*“After my wife divorced me, elderly people who were the organizers of marriage ceremony before wedding did not give me support.”*

Craig (1983), who says that the social lives of both men and women also change, confirmed this. Although, in most cases, friends remained supportive for two months following the divorce. These friends often faded as time passed. In general, women lost more of these ties than men, who were often included in the social activities of their married friends. Nonworking mothers felt especially isolated. Having lost the social contacts they had with their husband’s professional associates, they often felt trapped in a world dominated by children and childcare.

### 4.11.2 The challenge of losing old friends

According to Francis (2013), the loss of a close loved one through divorce can be a devastating blow. However, it is very painful when you also lose old friends. It is a sad fact that many friends do not know how to relate to their friends who are suffering loss of a husband or wife through divorce. Their spirit, which is very vulnerable at that time, can be wounded by their words and actions if they do not understand what is going on inside their heart. Sometimes the wounding happens because of their “rubbish” talk – and that can be hurtful.

Friendships do not avoid the impact and stress of divorce. Maintaining solid friendships and a support network is critical for making it through the process; however, many old friendships get lost. Most persons going through the process are challenged to build a new friendship network (Redding, 2012). Participant number 1 stated that “the number of friends reduced.”

During interview with participant number 29, this challenge became clear. This participant stated that,

*“After divorce, friends became few, for me this was a challenge. Instead of healing who was wounded through divorce. Some of my friends’ condemned I by saying you might have committed secret, personal or private sin. What a painful moment in my life. What a discouraging statement to me as a divorcee who was experiencing painful challenges. To have been falsely accused by my friends in this divorce pain. I was in a burning flame in my life. Because of being a divorcee, I lost support from those I once relied on.”*

What this participant was saying is in line with what Masakona (2005) indicates when he says that friends you thought would take your moment of pain as a time of coming closer to you, and pray earnestly with you, instead might do the opposite. They will let you down just when you thought they would be the ones to feel for you. Ravhudzulo (2005) also states that after a person is divorced, human friendship and love can be changed. Even the most loyal friends are distracted by their own concerns and neglect a victim.

#### **4.11.3 The challenge of seeing yourself as unfit**

During interview with participant number 1, the participant said that,

*“...after my divorce, things that I did, I no longer able to do, I saw myself as unfit in the world of marriage. I have lost all interest for marriage.”*

#### **4.11.4 The challenge of dealing with criticisms from people close to you**

Participant number 12 indicated that,

*“...my relatives, friends, neighbours, church mates criticized me a lot after I was divorced by husband. This made me to think of the story of Miriam and Aaron against Moses in the Bible from the book of Numbers 12:1-3. Miriam and Aaron were closest to Moses. Miriam was Moses’ sister and Aaron, Moses’ brother, but they criticized him.”*

What participant number 12 have experienced is in line with what Masakona (2005) reveals when he says that when criticisms come from people closest to you, the people you thought would be comforting you, it is more painful than when they come from afar. Masakona indicates that when the enemy wants to frustrate you, he will always make use of your own trustees. Job’s situation was also pathetic. His close friends, whom he trusted so much, became very ones to be sceptical about his situation. They concluded that Job’s losses came because God was revenging him for his secret sins. It is painful to be let down and rejected by those you thought would be your intercessors.

#### **4.11.5 The challenge of relating to your married friends**

Participant number 21 indicated that after divorce, her married friends never phoned her, she put things in this way: “I never received a phone call from my married friends, even when they do church activities, they no longer include me. I ended up by concluding that, they are no longer phoning me because now I am a divorcee.” Ravhudzulo (2005) confirmed what participant number 21 indicated when she said that in the church we often quote comforting verses, but in practice, we deny them. In many congregations, single people (including divorcees) are often excluded from decision-making and assigned “jobs” that are seen as an extension of home life – flower arranging, cleaning, preparing meals, teaching Sunday School, fundraising and charity. Divorcees are placed in a lower position to the side lines, even though they are gifted than married friends. Their visions, voices and values, which emphasize compassion, caring, cooperation, economic justice, and respect for human and Christian rights, are not included.

#### **4.11.6 The challenge of drinking alcohol**

According to Raistrick, Heather and Godfrey (2006) if you drink too much, the next day you may be unable to remember what happened while you were drinking. Alcohol can be a very effective way of feeling better for a few hours. If you are depressed and lacking in energy, it can be tempting

to use alcohol to help you keep going and cope with life. The problem is that it is easy to slip into drinking regularly, using it like a medication. The benefits soon wear off and the drinking becomes part of a routine. You start to notice that: instead of *choosing* to have a drink, you *feel* you have to have it, you wake up with shaky hands and a feeling of nervousness, you start to drink earlier and earlier, your work starts to suffer, your drinking starts to affect your relationships, you carry on drinking in spite of the problems it causes, you find you have to drink more and more to get the same effect (tolerance), you start to ‘binge drink’ regularly, other things have less importance than alcohol. Alcohol can lead to psychosis (hearing voices when there is nobody there), dementia (memory loss, rather like Alzheimer's dementia), and physical (damage organs, such as the liver or brain). Raistrick (2006) reveals that there is connection between depression and alcohol where self-harm and suicide is much more common in people with alcohol problems. It seems that it can work in two ways: you regularly drink too much including (including ‘binge drinking’) which makes you feel depressed or you drink to relieve anxiety or depression.

Participant number 28 turned to drinking alcohol hoping that it would help him to cope with the pain of being divorced by a wife whom he love. He puts it in this way:

*“I started drinking alcohol when I realized that I was always thinking about the money I spent to her studies and good times I spent with her in marriage. I thought that drinking alcohol will be a solution to deal with the pain of being divorced and will make me to forget. What is worrying me is that drinking alcohol is damaging my physical body.”*

#### **4.11.7 The challenge of identity and direction**

During interview, participant number 7 indicated that

*“...as a divorcee, I have been identified with my husband, his life, job, friends, hopes and dreams. His fortunes and misfortunes were mine. Now I feel as if I do not really know who I am or what I should be doing with my life after divorce. I tried to resist the urge of panic as I face this overwhelming sense of disaster, fear and meaningless. I wanted friends from the church who will act as an anchor who would tell me that this traumatic period will pass. Even though I didn't see church*

*support, but I took time to find myself and a new sense of direction. My identity does not lie only in the divorce that makes me who I am, but in my relationship with God. Jesus is not only my Saviour and Redeemer, but also my Shepherd, Brother and Friend. As I hold onto him with the determination to keep spiritually strong and growing, I needed to find new goals. I became surprised to see new doors that were opened for me. I didn't lose my heart as a divorcee. That is why I am trying to cope."*

Retief (2000) confirms what participant number 17 has said by saying that as a child,

*"...you were part of a family. Identity and direction were not major concerns. Marriage opened a new world of loving and being loved. You found new meaning, and raising your children added to this."*

#### **4.11.8 The challenge of dress**

During interview with participant number 23, she said that

*"After being divorced by my husband from my marriage, I changed the way I dress. I no longer feel the need to look attractive and become undisciplined and untidy. I lost my weight. I allowed my depression to get on top of me so that I pay no attention to my appearance. But after being counselled by my mother, dignity and self-respect made it easier for me to accept myself and for others to accept and respect me."*

Retief (2000) who says that the same applies to the way you dress confirmed this. I have seen men and women let themselves go, in marriage. They no longer feel the need to look attractive and become undisciplined and untidy. During the separation prior divorce, they lose weight. Others allow their depression to get on top of them so that they pay no attention to their appearance. Part of building self-respect is taking care of yourself; you will feel better about yourself. This does not mean that you have to go overboard to spend more than you can afford. But the better you look, the better you will feel about yourself. Dignity and self-respect will make it easier for you to accept yourself and for others to accept and respect you.

#### **4.11.9 The challenge at the workplace**

During interview with participant number 21, it became clear that

*“After divorce it is very difficult to work in a fruitful way, more especially if you are working in the same place with the divorced partner. He stated that people who are working with us in this institution knowing that we are a family have affected with our divorce, they are worrying because we are still working together. Some times as divorced partners we are attending work meetings together, we are managers of various departments of the same institution. This things is not good, I am no longer enjoying my job, because some times when I talk to my divorced partner or greet her, she just keep quiet, for me, I see this as a serious challenge”.*

Participant 14 put it in this way

*“At workplace, it was difficult for me to perform well. I use to laugh with my workmates, but inside me I was not good lady, I was crying.”*

Participant 20 put it in this way

*“My performance at work was affected a lot, sometimes used to arrive at work late. The pain of being divorced by my wife, to me caused oversleeping.”*

#### **4.11.10 The challenge of acceptance**

During interview with participant number 21, he stated that

*“After a lengthy period of struggle after being divorced by my wife. I accepted the inevitable and seek to place my life back to her. It is at this point when I began to accept the emotional divorce”.*

#### **4.11.11 The challenge of become truly independent**

Participant number 8 stated that

*“After being divorced by my husband from a marriage which spent only four years, my challenge of being rejected by church members made me to be strong in the Word of God. Through God’s Word, God healed me and helped me to cope in life after divorce. I became truly independent.”*

According to Munroe (2003), the fourth reaction is to become truly independent. This person has achieved balance and is on the way to being healed.

#### **4.11.12 The challenge of facing a tough life**

According to relationship article of Ireland (2016), returning to singlehood, especially after many years, is tough for many divorcing persons. Some individuals are even experiencing singlehood for the first time, having gone from their parents’ homes to married life. Often, they thought they would never live as single persons and they are completely unprepared for the concept itself, much less putting it into practice.

During the interview, participant number 5 stated that,

*“Life after divorce is very tough. She said that it is like there is no door to healing and life after divorce. I concluded that because no one came to me to show support.”*

No psychiatrist, no psychologist, no counsellor, no church pastor came to me to heal my broken heart. What I did as an African divorcee who loves God,

*“I strongly believed that Jesus is the answer. I also believed that Jesus was anointed to heal my broken heart. I made my heart available to Him who is my Saviour and Lord. Another thing that made me to believe that there is life after tough pain of divorce is what the Word of God tells me from the book of Isaiah 43:2, a verse that talks about the presence of God with His people: When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle you. As a divorcee, I believe that it is true that life after divorce is very tough, because it is like passing through the waters, it is like*

*passing through the fires, more especially if no one comes to me to be supportive, it seems as if everything is falling apart, and I am drowning in life.”*

#### **4.11.13 The challenge of being unable to develop yourself**

During interview with participant number 24, he indicated to the researcher that

*“After my wife divorced me, I was unable to develop myself, what I did is only to sell eggs from door to door to keep myself busy.”*

Socio-economic pressures challenges.

#### **4.11.14 The challenge of financial burdens of both former partners**

Waite and Gallagher (2014) note that divorce is financially stressful. They indicated that the financial burden is greatest during the first year after divorce and varies for each woman depending on how much money she contributed to the family income before divorce and the ability and willingness of her former husband to make support payments. If she was already earning a decent income and her husband can be relied on to make full child-support payments, and then the financial stress of divorce will not be as great. However, many women are not prepared financially for life as a single parent. As a result, they often need to rely on public assistance (welfare) programmes to supplement their family finances. This financial support is crucial for many women, although it is still unlikely to cover all financial needs. Women at the crossroads of divorce should evaluate their financial situation carefully. Good preparation for the financial challenges of divorce is important to minimize its negative effects. Even with careful preparation for the financial impact of divorce, however, money problems will still be common. Research suggests that women usually do not recover fully from the financial consequences of divorce until they remarry.

Craig (1983) states that financial hardships were reported by both men and women. With both two households to support instead of one, some men found their incomes spread too thin to make ends meet. Many took on a second job or worked overtime in an attempt to increase their spending money. Women who were housewives before their divorce suffered great financial strain- especially if their husbands failed to make their alimony or child support payments. Strapped by these new economic

burdens, many women were forced to spend less time with their children and had little or no time for them (Goetting, 1981). Participant number 25 indicated that,

*“After the divorce my standard of living dropped because the settlement and maintenance payments cannot support the lifestyle I enjoyed in marriage. For me as an African woman who is a divorcee, job hunting and re-entering the marketplace may become a nightmare, administering a series of humiliating blows to my already low self-image.”*

According to Rye and Moore (2015), one factor that can significantly affect your mood following a divorce is financial distress. Divorce affects both your wallet and your heart. Divorcees may deeply worry about how he/she is going to pay the lawyer, court and costs, alimony, child-support, mortgage or rent, car expenses. According to researcher, a pastor can play a role through pastoral care and counselling, a divorcee can be given a good financial advice through pastoral care and counselling, so that he/she cannot overwhelmed by the financial burdens.

#### **4.11.15 The challenge of financial pressures**

According to Colette (1997), divorcees (*especially those who are not working*) need financial support from church members to break their isolation and sense of hopelessness and helplessness. Referral may have to be made to the appropriate agencies. The deacon’s intervention is of prime importance to meet the financial challenges and needs of the divorcees who are not working and their children. Through church deacons, financial help must be sought from the church and from various levels of government and/or from voluntary organizations to help those who are able and willing to take care of divorcees.

Participant number 1 indicated that,

*“I found myself similarly surprised when it came to finances. I was the breadwinner for at least 10 years prior to divorce so I thought I and my children would be fine. However due to the nature of our divorce, I do not receive child support or assistance with our significant medical expenses, I was not prepared alone for the expense of being a single parent. So, I worry about how I am going*

*to put our four children through university, I have to provide all their clothes, deodorant, female needs, sunscreen, eye drops, Band-Aids, razors, blah blah blah for both houses. It adds up to more than I expected. Finances are my number one worry in life. Hopefully one of these days I will be on top of them and not worry about that aspect of life.”*

Participant number 11 stated that,

*“...because of divorce pain, financially I am struggling; I am the only one who is carrying alone my children’s school fees, tertiary education fees.”*

This is supported by Maswanganyi (1990), who says that in today’s life, the change of life styles caused by divorce has put an economic strain on divorcees.

Divorcees experienced frustration and sadness because they lacked financial support from the divorced partner, who used to support before divorce. One participant responded as follows:

*“Since that day she never wanted to see me, she stopped paying school fees for the children, since then she has never sent money or just to come and see the children, she is no longer involved in anything in the life of children. I am struggling alone. I was also frustrated because of the delay of church deacon’s intervention to offer financial assistance or to advise me on how to get social grants. It took me many months to get help from the disability-granting committee. It is delaying in the sense that I needed money to buy food.”*

One participant responded as follows:

*“I went to the social worker’s office to explain my painful situation, but I was told to come on a certain date, and the date is written on the small paper and when I look at it I think it is delaying, because the challenge of lacking money is getting worse.”*

Participant number 21 put things in this way “after divorce, I had a serious challenge of finance”

#### **4.11.16 The challenge of debt**

Retief (2000) indicates that debt can cause great stress, especially if one partner withholds information or facts from the other. Participant 16 expressed it in this way:

*“The challenge of debt for supporting my children, for me goes hand in hand with financing their education. When my wife left me with children, by that time, as a couple we were owing R32 000 for school fees. I had to get this money; I decided to make a bank loan. I am now busy struggling to pay back this money.”*

Retief (2000), who states that after divorce, your self-image takes a bad knock and your confidence may be shaken by the divorce, supports this. You may need funds or be faced with the shock of re-entering the job-market. This may be a difficult and humiliating experience.

#### **4.11.17 The challenge of losing property**

Participant number 21 put things in this way ‘after divorce, I feel disturbed because I lost my property, when I left that marriage because of love of children I left everything and the house with the mother of my children.

#### **4.11.18 The challenge of poverty**

According to Ravhudzulo (2007), the spirit of going back to poverty discourages an individual; this spirit tells a person that you will remain poor. The spirit of poverty makes people apologetic to their family situations. They allow the poverty that came to dominate their lives. They allow poverty to dominate their future. People are now totally afraid to venture into new avenues, try their luck and get out of their family situation. They do not believe their situation won’t be like that forever”. This was experienced by participant number 28, who said that,

*“after being divorced by my husband who was a breadwinner, I experienced the situation of going back to the painful living of poverty, where I often had no meal to cook food, by that time I was not working, sometimes my grandmother brought a bag of mealie-meal so that I and my six children can eat. That was a very tough*

*life of going back to the painful living of poverty with so many children. Sometime their children went to school without food. Some were led to drop out of school”.*

According to researcher, this situation should be addressed by pastoral care and counselling.

#### **4.11.19 The challenge of suspicious and false accusations**

According to Francis (2013), from time to time there are people who, for various reasons, have delighted in making false accusations. Sometimes it is because of jealousy, sometimes it is just enjoying seeing one put down; other times ignorant gossip. Many false accusations have no effect upon us, but then there comes one that is “a bit close to the bone.” It is directed at a loved one, or yourself, or your ministry. If we do not see those false accusations as being what they are – false! – we can take the accusation “on board” and it lodges in our spirit. We are wounded. This is where honesty is so important. We have to be honest with God, ourselves, and other people. If the accusation is false, keep it false. Do not give room for the enemy to “take us out” because we re-act wrongly. (If the accusation happens to be true, then we need to do something about it).

During an interview with participant number 8, she indicated that

*“we divorcees are a problem to many pastors because we are blamed and suspected in most cases that we tend to fall in love with those who are in marriages. We who are females are threat to pastors’ wives; we are also regarded as the major cause of problems in the church because pastor’s wives do not trust their husbands. Pastors’ wives are suspicious of us when they see their husbands visiting our homes. Most of us are seen as people who do not live right. We are regarded as people who break other people’s or church member’s families. We are condemned that we are unholy. So it becomes very difficult for us to be used in the church.”*

#### **4.11.20 The challenge of searching for new accommodation**

During interview with participant number 28, she indicated that

*“I had to look for a new accommodation to stay with my child.”*

Participant number 26, put things in this way:

*“...after divorce, I found myself having to look for my own accommodation which was not so easy within a short space of time because during that time everybody fights to own the place. If you feel you don’t want to fight for the sake of your life you have to live the place with peace and harmony.”*

Participant number 18 put it in this way

*“I was forced to look for my own accommodation. After divorce I came to live in one room with my five children. Life was tough. After divorce my husband followed me and continues to abuse me in my own accommodation. I have decided to re-use my home surname.”*

#### **4.11.21 The challenge of searching for a new job**

According to Retief (2000), some divorcees, after divorce, would not immediately find jobs, but remained unemployed for long periods. In some cases, they spent long periods looking for jobs without success. In the cases where they found employment, they earned very low wages. This is a serious challenge. Participant number 28, who is a mother of six children, experienced this. She said that

*“After my husband went to another wife I spent many days looking for a job, but I didn’t succeed. I decided to start small business if sailing bananas and tomatoes so that I and my children can live.”*

### **4.12 Legal challenges**

#### **4.12.1 The challenge of the legal process**

According to Guriras (2002), it is very important to know the legal process. In order to make the process less traumatic in the court, a divorcee should know what is expected in court. Participant number 22 indicated during interview that,

*“Because of not knowing the legal process after divorce, I became frustrated and lost hope that legally I will not succeed, especially in the way law function in the divorce cases, and in the way things are done in the courtroom.”*

#### **4.12.2 The challenge of paying lawyers**

Participant number 16 indicated that divorce is not easy. It is challenging if you were married in community of property.

*“Since I was divorced, I have already paid more than R50 000 for lawyers. I went to Pretoria High Court with my divorced wife. My wife made an urgent application. My appearance at Pretoria High Court has to pay R11 000. My wife wanted to take the children. For her she paid R20 000 at Pretoria High Court. From 2012-2015, I always went to meet my wife in court. The truth is that divorce takes a long period if it is contested. Even the legal lawyers, sometimes they delay process.”*

What participant number 16 indicated is in line with what Retief (2000) states when he said that “after divorce, many Christians engage themselves in seeking a good lawyer. Suing for a divorce seems to transfer the responsibility for the marriage breakdown to them when they have done all in their power to save the marriage.”

#### **4.12.3 The challenge of going to the courts**

Participant number 16 indicated that

*“...after divorce, I spent many times in legal courts. One day one of my children asked me why I always going to court. It was difficult for me to answer her, because inside I knew that I am going to meet with her mother. But I was forced to tell my children what is happening between their mother and me. When the divorce court day comes, I was not happy, I feel like I cannot go to court.”*

Retief (2000) states that the day of divorce may be very traumatic. The person filing for the divorce has to appear in court before a judge to give evidence as to the cause of the marriage breakdown and

the claims of both parties. A divorcee has to make provision for the children if they are old enough to understand what is happening.

#### **4.12.4 The challenge of dividing properties after divorce**

Participant number 16 indicated that there is this issue of dividing property after divorce, which is done by country law.

*“I now have two cars, and she has 3 cars. We have 4 houses. Now the wife is refusing that the two cars do not belong to her, only one is for her. It is one thing that I am experiencing as a challenge. She is insisting me to move from the house where I am staying with children. Because of this issue, we also went to high courts to see senior advocates: I, wife and children. The law allowed me to stay with the children in the house we are using. That is why I am staying with the children. Even though it is in that way, I don’t have peace. Divorce is not easy, it is very difficult.”*

Retief (2000) makes it clear that tension can run high when you and your lawyer meet with your ex and his or her lawyer to arrange the dividing of properties.

#### **4.12.5 The challenge of maintenance**

Participant number 16 made it clear that

*“Because I am struggling alone, I was forced to go to maintenance court to make the law to force her. I have done that because in life I am in pain as a Christian father.”*

Retief (2000) indicates that as a Christian you must face the unpleasant but essential task of seeking legal assistance to obtain child support and provide for yourself. Even though the divorcee is turning a new leaf, the person has to make sure that the children are maintained. He points out that if the spouses have not reached an agreement with regard to the various claims, for example custody and maintenance, both have to appear in court to testify.

#### 4.12.6 The challenge of regaining custody of yourself

Participant number 25 stated that “*to be healed from the challenge of trauma, I had to regain custody of myself.*” According to Munroe (2003), people think about the custody of children, custody of property, even custody of pets. However, few think about regaining custody of themselves. Regaining custody of yourself means finding a balance, setting priorities, and dealing with emotions – not repressing them, but dealing with them. In order to gain her custody, participant number 25 indicated the following:

*“First, I had to accept my situation, not deny it, no matter how it hurts. Secondly, I need to get counselling before making any decisions. That means counselling from the Word, from the Holy Spirit, and from people I can trust. After a certain time of being glued to my wife, divorce means I have been given a declaration of independence against my will. (As a man I have to face paying my own bills, taking care of children by myself, planning for the future alone. If it is a man, he must face eating out all the time or doing his own cooking, not seeing his children day to day as they grow up, and washing his own clothes – this was confirmed by participant number 11 who said that as an African man who is a divorcee, I am always eating at restaurant, sometimes food that are about to expire that I cooked may be three days or four days ago.”*

According to Munroe (2003), regaining custody of yourself means that you take responsibility for restoring your life according to God’s principles and submit to His healing process. It means to take your roots out of other people and yet develop the freedom to share your fruit with them.

#### 4.13 Remarriage challenges

According to Kruger (1991), the divorce figure in our country is high. Consequently, it often happens that divorced people remarry. The first thing that one should ask is that whether it is permissible to marry a divorced person. What does the Bible say? For the believer this is the crucial question – whether a divorced person or not-is an important step in his/her life. It is a lifelong bond, and without the blessing of God, it will be a failure- in vain, as the psalmist of Psalm 127 stresses. The Bible also leaves no room for misconceptions. In Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 Jesus says; “But I say that a man who

divorces his wife, unless she has been unfaithful, causes her to commit adultery. And anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.” The Bible therefore says no. one is guilty of adultery if one marries a divorced person. Why? According to the Bible, there really are no grounds for divorce! Because of the hardness of man’s heart, Moses did allow this in practice (cf. Matthew 19:8). That did not mean, however, that divorce was allowed in Biblical terms. According to the Bible, a husband and a wife will always remain just that even though they might be formally divorced. Paul states this very clearly in 1 Corinthians 7:10, 11: “Now, for those who are married I have a command that comes not from me, but from the Lord. A wife must not leave her husband. But if she does leave him, let her remain single or else go back to him. And the husband must not leave his wife.” Somebody who marries a divorced person therefore in reality marries the wife or the husband of somebody else, even though they are divorced. For that reason, the Bible equals such a marriage with adultery.

#### **4.13.1 Is this true in all cases?**

Is this the case even where the divorced person concerned is the “innocent” party in the divorce? Yes, because the “innocence” does not negate the fact that the person still belongs to somebody else. Moreover, if the other party is already married, so that reconciliation between the two parties has become impossible in practical terms? Even then, because the other party too was not supposed to have married. The guilty of the party does not suspend the guilty of his/her original marriage partner who now makes himself/herself guilty of the same transgression.

And if the other party has already died? Then the position changes. The original marriage has now been terminated by death. The way is clear for such a person to remarry. In the consideration of a marriage with such a person, however, it is always important to try to determine whether reconciliation had been effected, because punitive measures by the church usually follow on divorce, which in the case of many divorced people unfortunately lead to an estrangement from the church. This of course becomes the first obstacle in the new marriage being contracted.

#### **4.13.2 The view of the church**

What is the view of the church with regard to a marriage taking place involving a divorced person?

- Church discipline is applied in terms of judgement of the church council in every individual case, and the church will here take into account the differences in point of view regarding divorce.
- When the guilty party confess their guilty and show repentance, the church will once again assimilate them into the fabric of the church.
- Once true repentance has been shown, the marriage need not be dissolved but be acknowledged *de facto* and no further discipline will be exercised.
- Only in cases where there are repeated divorces and remarriages entered into seemingly lightly will this be seen as persistence in sin, and will the person be cut off from the church formally.

The church is therefore very firm in its point of view, but supple in its application of this viewpoint. The glory of God is maintained, but his forgiveness towards repentant sinners is also revealed. The church does not lose sight of the fact that we live in a world broken by sin. It also takes not very thoroughly of the fact that the wounds of Christ can affect a cure.

#### **4.13.3 Think again!**

In spite of it being forbidden by the Bible, it often happens that believers marry divorced people. Without our giving the green light for it, one could in many instances be sympathetic and understanding about this. The divorced person might well be someone (male and female) with young children who have a great need of fatherly guidance or motherly care. Reconciliation might be impossible for the couple in practical terms through the other person being married or being beyond rehabilitation. There can also be a marvellous camaraderie and bond in faith in such a relationship, which, as far one can see humanly, might lay the foundations for a very happy marriage. In actual fact, there are many such marriages that can serve as examples to all.

#### **4.13.4 Sense of guilt**

Seeing that such a step is expressly forbidden by the Bible, one is inevitably going to have a certain amount of guilt which will accompany one, even if only sub-consciously. If this is not dealt with properly, it might well be the first factor undermining such a marriage. To what extent can you deal

with it? Would you be able to reconcile yourself to the fact that you are really married to someone else's husband (and vice versa)? Would you be able to adjust to this in faith in the sight of God?

#### **4.13.5 Complicated situation**

Often a divorced person has children. Do you feel able to cope with them on your own? Could you have the necessary patience with them? Most probably they themselves are still feeling because of the trauma of the divorce.

There is often also still a certain amount of fighting about the children between the ex-partners, and consequently taking sides by the children. Do you feel that you can cope with this?

#### **4.13.6 Really so innocent?**

You will have noticed that I referred to the "innocent" party above. The quotation marks indicate that such a party might not be all that innocent. Often the guilt of the "guilty" party is simply a little more obvious. The "innocent" party also to a greater or a lesser extent contributes to the "guilt" of the other. Frigidity in intimate relations might well be a directly contributory factor towards adultery. Domination, intolerance, dissatisfaction, or miserliness might be characteristics of an otherwise exemplary character. These might lead to great unhappiness in marriage. Keep your eyes pen for such characteristics, otherwise you might very soon find yourself also in the same position as the previous "guilty" party.

#### **4.13.7 Take care!**

The psychopathic person's marriage is often in great danger of landing on the rocks. The chances are therefore quite good that the divorced person that you are involved with might be such a person.

#### **4.13.8 Be careful!**

The psychopath is an immature type of a person who has the ability to obtain a grip on people and to exploit them. They often leave a trail of destruction behind them. If you get to do with such a person, you might even be made to believe that he is innocence itself and has been horribly abused by the other party. Go into the history of the "innocent party," or you might well be next victim.

#### **4.13.9 Relationship with the church**

What is the attitude of the divorced person towards the church? Perhaps it is aggressive of the church discipline that has been applied. Just remembers that although the church has a duty to fulfil the church is never hard on repentant sinners. If the divorced person should bring you into conflict with your church, then the red light should begin to flicker. How can your marriage ever succeed without true involvement in the church? How could you ever raise your children without involvement in the church? Involve your pastor or your elder fully in your decision. It might be just being that such a person might open your eyes to dangers inherent in the situation. Should you, however, decide to marry, then the spiritual guidance of such people would be indispensable for both of you in the marriage situation.

According to the Bible, the divorced person has to be reconciled to the ex-partner. A divorced person is not permitted to marry someone else. Therefore, one should not marry a divorced person. The following are the challenges of divorcees experienced by participants:

#### **4.13.10 The challenge of remarriage by a guilty party**

Remarriage is a very sensitive and difficult issue to resolve within the church. The very issue of remarriage says there has been a divorce, except when a spouse has died. The church is somewhat divided on the permissive will of God concerning divorce and remarriage (Robertson, 1987). According to participant number 4, who divorced his wife after having an affair outside his marriage, during interview he accepted his guilty of divorcing his former wife. After divorcing his wife he left the church, and come back to the same church when he wanted to enter into another marriage. He told the researcher that before he entered into another marriage, he followed the church procedure of disciplining those who violated the marriage law of God; he allowed the church to correct his wrong doings. However, what he saw in the church leadership is like his idea of remarrying had divided church council and church members who knew the stories of his previous marriage. After church discipline, he ended up entering into another marriage with a new wife; that marriage blessing was held in front of the same church members.

*“He said it was the church-pastor who blessed my second marriage. But some church members were not happy about this new marriage, especially those who*

*were friends of the former marriage. What encouraged me to enter into that second marriage in the church is the verse from 2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature, old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new”. By this verse, as a guilty party, I understood that God’s magnificent act of grace restores me to fellowship with him. Along with millions of other sinners of the worst kind such as adulterers, as a divorcee I may find new hope and new life from God. I had a genuine conversion, not empty, hypocritical claims. I followed the order of a pastor of counselling me with my new wife before marriage. For me it was the grace of God to be allowed to enter into a Christian remarriage as a guilty person.”*

Retief (2000) indicates that even a guilty party can enter another marriage. It is inappropriate for the guilty spouse who comes to repentance and Christian conversion to rush into another marriage. Every effort must be made to seek reconciliation if that is at all possible. In addition, an extraordinary effort is needed to make restitution for the hurt, damage and loss the family has suffered. This must be done with caution and sensitivity. If, after a suitable period, all efforts to re-establish the family unit with the help of counsellors and pastors fail or your ex-spouse remarries, that chapter of your life must be closed. Having repented, made every effort at restitution and established your spiritual bona fides, you may plan with great carefulness and humility to marry again. Some people may think it is unfair for a partner who has caused so much damage and hurt to be allowed to remarry and become a respectable member of the church. However, God’s forgiveness is immense and makes us new creatures. If the claim to be a Christian is superficial or there has been no record of true repentance and humility before God, or if there is no genuine sorrow for past behaviour, to grant such a person Christian marriage would be to perpetuate the abuse Jesus condemned (Matt. 19:1-18). A further consideration to bear in mind in thinking through this challenge is the fact that, if the guilty party becomes a Christian, he or she may only marry a Christian (1 Cor. 1:39; 2 Cor. 6:14-18). On the other hand, if the ex-spouse to whom the repentant partner wants to be reconciled is resolutely opposed to Christianity, even though they were the offended party, an added complication arises. When all is said and done, we have to acknowledge the paucity of our wisdom. We attempt to deal with each case on its own merit according to Scripture and our limited understanding. One thing is true- Jesus Christ, the Son of God, forgives our sins. Our hope lies in Him.

#### **4.13.11 The challenge of replacing pain with a person of the opposite sex**

During interview, participant number 8 indicated that after divorce

*“I wanted to enter in a quick remarriage to shame my previous partner who divorced me. I regard this as a way of dealing with my trauma. I attempted to replace pain of divorce with a person of the opposite sex. As a divorcee, I felt that sexual pressure is very painful; that is why I quickly get into another-marriage relationship with another married man who lives with his wife and children, but as a Christian, I felt that I am doing wrong things. I did this because no one came to me and show me the way through pastoral care and counselling that would advised me to do things in a right way in dealing with my trauma. In this challenge, a divorcee, especially the one who didn't start with the divorce, will remarry to prove a point to the divorced partner.”*

This is in line with what Munroe (2003) says, namely that some divorced people follow some way of dealing with their trauma, they move into a fantasy world or into a quick new relationship. Some divorced people try to escape one hurt by replacing the relationship with another.

#### **4.13.12 The challenge of remarriage to prove the point to the divorced partner**

According to Goroncy (2011), many divorced persons remarry within the first year. Not surprisingly, second marriages have a higher casualty rate than first ones. Without allowing time to heal and learn from the ending of a love relationship the possibility of repeating the earlier unsuccessful pattern is high. Among divorcees in the church, there are those who consider remarriage, after divorce. Their challenge is that it is not easy to meet someone who is suitable and emotionally stable to trust. Another challenge is financial security. In most cases even if divorcees can find someone who is ready for marriage, that man or woman may be faced with financial difficulties to an extent of even taking the little that the divorcee has. Another issue of major concern is that Christian divorcees would prefer to meet a man or woman who is born again. The church should always advice divorcees to be very careful choosing life partners. In this way, the church must try to come with practical solutions and to encourage all those divorcees who live alone.

Participant number 12 experienced fear of being married again and is also fearful of her new status as a victim of divorce, believing that others will think less of her. She became concerned that what has happened to her marriage could happen to other marriages. This incident of emotional shock overwhelms her thoughts of the painful things that happened and she cry. While she is crying after divorce, she often says,

*“...the unexpected has happened. I never dreamt this would happen to my marriage. I am helpless, I have failed, maybe there was something I could have done to prevent this from happening, and I ache, my heart feel bleeds. I feel rejected. What has happened has happened. I will face it.*”

Participant number 21 who was divorced because of the issue of childlessness stated that

*“Because of not able to have a child I was afraid to enter into remarriage, I thought that if I enter into remarriage with another man the same thing is going to happen. Childlessness is a serious challenge that confronted me as an African woman.”*

Ayankeye (2013), who said that childlessness is a serious challenge confronting many couples in Africa at present, also confirmed what she said.

#### **4.13.13 The challenge of talking to children about new marriage**

Participant number 14 indicated to the researcher that

*“I am in a second marriage, and I came here with my teenage boy, we have been forced to change the previous surname to the new one because I have a new husband. One day the boy asked me why I changed our surname. As a mother it was very difficult for me to answer that question. I could see that this thing has affected him a lot. For me it was a serious challenge.”*

Retief (2000), who indicates that it is important to talk to your children about your second marriage even though it is not easy, also made this clear. These children need to know their new stepparent and understand that he or she will not replace their other parent. Children develop amazing

misconceptions if things are not explained carefully to them. If both of you in a remarriage have children from your previous marriages, the situation will be more difficult for them. Explain to the children how they should relate to each other. The sudden invasion of their space by a new ‘brother’ or ‘sister’ can be more traumatic than we imagine. Their world will be a tough world. Seeing you pay attention to these strangers can produce jealousy, anger and insecurity in them.

Another participant indicated that,

*“I had a difficult situation in a new marriage when I found out that my children do not accept the children of my new husband.”*

What this participant have said is in line with what is said by Retief (2003), namely that what is important is that if two people want to enter into a remarriage, they must consider the children’s issued before they come to live together in remarriage, both of them as new partners who are planning to remarry will have to work hard at accepting each other’s children and building relationship with them. Integrating children from two new lovers who are entering into a second marriage will not be an overnight success.

#### **4.13.14 The challenge of finances in remarriage**

Retief (2000) indicates that you may both enter into a new marriage with asserts, property, cash or inheritance. Beware of simply throwing everything together in a common pool. Your children may have asserts and inheritances from the family of your former spouse, who may have intended from the family of your former spouse, who may have up and ask questions. Do not prepare a fertile breeding ground for resentment and feelings of injustice. It is good to seek legal advice before entering into remarriage to avoid acrimony with your new partner, your ex-spouse and his/her family. Talk the issue through so that everyone knows where they stand. The same care should be exercised if you or your new partner is bringing debts into the marriage. Discuss the matter honestly and openly and decide how you are going to deal with it. According to participant number 15, he indicated that

*“When I entered into my new marriage I had my own property, and she also had her own, we discussed before marriage that my children who have already grown*

*up will have asserts and inheritance from the former spouse, me and my new wife have agreed before.”*

#### **4.13.15 The challenge of getting premarital counselling before remarriage**

Participant number 3 indicated that,

*“...that I am thinking of entering into a remarriage, and I now have a man who is in love with me, my problem is that he is very old, older than me. He has children, I also have children. I am in need of a premarital counselling; my problem is that he saying he has a lot of experience, he does not want to receive any premarital counselling. For me it is a challenge.”*

What participant number 3 said is in line with the view of Retief (2000), who indicates that before a divorcee remarry, he or she should receive premarital counselling. Neither the divorced individual nor his or her partner should be embarrassed about seeking help. The divorcee’s marriage failed the first time. The person must take precautions so that this will not happen again. Divorcees who enter into a remarriage should not think that because they have been through a divorce they know everything. He/she need help in new marriage, from sexual matters to finances. He/she live in a fallen world with false expectations. As Christians, his/her expectations must be based on the Word of the living God. With his help, he/she can make a success in his/her second marriage.

#### **4.13.16 The challenge of getting into marriage in an African way**

During the interview with participant number 21, he indicated that,

*“In my second marriage I decided to enter it in an African way, I found a wife who was also single after her husband’s death. I left my marriage arrangement in the hands of the old people. It is true that we are true Christians, but we must not forget that we are still African not by adoption, but by birth in African soil. I thought about the way my mother entered into marriage, and she never divorced my father. As African people we forget the way African marriages are organized, before marriage, old people in the family use to assess the family first. That is the way I followed in the arrangement of my second marriage. Before I entered it, I*

*started by going to my relatives and her relatives to ask about her life. To tell you the truth it was not easy to follow this way, but I was forced to because of the experienced that I got from the previous marriage. The final step is that, even my second marriage was also blessed in the church, but not by my church pastor, I have hired a pastor from another church. The pastor told us that the second marriage has its own challenges, if one makes a mistake, he/she can be told that it means that the one who divorced you was right because of your wrong living, or partners will fall into the temptation of comparing their new partners with the previous partners.”*

#### **4.13.17. The challenge of fear of getting into another marriage**

During interview with participant number 24, he indicated that,

*“...after marriage I had a fear of getting into another marriage. I thought that maybe all women are the same. If I marry I will again invite a problem into my life.”*

Participant number 20 put it in this way

*“In my mind I concluded that I won’t remarry, but as times goes on, when I was experiencing a healing process, I decided to get a new wife. I was not in hurry, I waited for the healing process, I also took time to assess the person whom I am going to marry.”*

Participant number 19 put it in this way

*“I told myself that I don’t want to get into marriage, because of the experience that I had of not having children or not giving birth in marriage, if a get into remarriage what about if history repeats itself? In the dying marriage I had no children, I was afraid that if I say yes to another man what about if even in the second marriage children are not born”.*

Participant number 20 stated that

*“I had a fear of marrying again. The desire of marrying dies, even though you know that marriage is a good thing.”*

#### **4.13.18 The challenge of pressure from relatives**

Participant number 24 indicated that,

*“After marriage breakdown through divorce, I had a pressure from my relatives. They wanted me to marry for second time.”*

Participant number 22 also put it in this way:

*“My relatives forced me to get into a new marriage quickly.”*

#### **4.13.19 The challenge of practicing sexual purity**

Retief (2000) stated that sexual purity is another ingredient of a healthy courtship. Sex outside marriage is not justified even though you are an adult. You do not need the spiritual or psychological pressure of a relationship that dishonours God and affects you spiritually. Apart from all other considerations, if you enjoy the privileges of marriage during courtship, why bother with marriage at all? Healthy and joyous sex is personal, intimate and soul-touching and could be the final gift you offer each other in marriage. If sex was spoilt for you in your first marriage, do not make it worse by experimenting before your second marriage. Seek the help of an experienced counsellor with your second marriage. Participant number 22 indicated that

*“Having sexual intercourse with his new lover before marriage whom he is planning to marry, because of knowing the truth of the Bible, he said ‘inside I felt that I disappointed my spiritual being. I had to cry to the Lord for seeking forgiveness. For to me it was difficult to abstain from sex, it was a struggle’”.*

Participant number 5 put it in this way

*“I thought about remarriage even though the pastor did not come to me. I wanted to have a man because I am a human being who likes to practice sexual intercourse only in marriage. Now I only want love of a man out of all things. I*

*want every man even if he is not a Christian because I was divorced by a Christian husband. Remarriage came to my mind as a person who knows the joy of marriage. Even a man who have many wives if he come to me and propose love to me, I will say yes. I will not listen to a pastor who can come to me and asks me why you didn't wait for a Christian man; he was supposed to visit me immediately after my divorce. I know that getting into remarriage is to protect me from the life of adultery. I think this part is an important part. I think a church is very much ignorant in this sex part. What the church only is wants my gifts. I have sexual feelings as a woman who wants sex from a man. The church kept quite in talking about sex. What must I do as church member? In our church, after divorce, is like there is no need of sex. If you see in our church, there are many divorcees, the number is growing. Pastors are just preaching to church members that: you must not make adultery. What must I do as a divorcee? The church is only preaching to the couples, how they raise children. Is like the care of divorcees is not included in the church order or constitution. According to me, I see Bible as a book which have all things that should be addressed such as the caring of divorcees and the challenge of divorcees. This challenge affects the whole life of a Christian. If I am not helped by pastoral care, when I go to consult African prophets or African traditional healers, the church must not blame me. The church must take that challenges seriously. When I am divorced I am not a dead person. I told myself that when I am in marriage I do not want to become a "mbuyavhuhadzi," but now I am a "mbuyavhuhadzi" "a person who returned home of parents from marriage".*

#### **4.13.20 The challenge of sexual difficulties in remarriage.**

During interview with participant number 21, he indicated that

*"In my second marriage in the beginning things were difficult, but as times goes one, things changed on the way, and very well. What made sex difficult in my side is that in the previous marriage, the past experience and the way I was treated by my wife touched me a lot and switch off my sexual feelings. In this second*

*marriage, because of the way of arrangement “African way and Christian way” I and my new wife are giving thanks to the Lord, we are playing together, walking together, going out together to shopping while carrying each other’s hands, visiting our nearest small hotels and our nearest water dams to have a time together, eating pockets of Simba’s, and yogurt and spend a time together. We often go to visit Galitos and buy a half chicken and start eating. In my new marriage I found that things that can build a healthy marriage are little things. Even in that dead marriage we used to celebrates birthdays. Even in this second marriage we are always celebrating special days. I married in the church, after marriage feast, we also go to honeymoon. My power of sex as an African man. In this new journey, I found that pure hot water is the best solution to solve bedroom politics, I don’t use African trees as an African man, but pure hot water as a power of sex. One day after two litters drinking hot pure water, my new wife asked me a simple question: are you no longer suffering with sugar diabetes? I told her that the solution of all this is drinking a lot of pure hot water. The saying of water is life be applied in sex life is saving my new marriage because pure hot water cleans kidneys”.*

#### **4.13.21 The challenge of building new trust.**

During the interview with participant number 14, she indicated that

*“A serious challenge that I am still facing is that things that happened in the previous marriage, done by my previous husband make me not to trust the new husband that a have, I think that may be even this new husband will do worse things that happened in that old marriage. It is my serious challenge.”*

#### **4.14 Data Analysis and Interpretation of the Challenges**

The researcher collected data from different participant of sampled population and recorded the information. After collecting and capturing data from the research field, the researcher read the information captured. He then began to classify the relevant information into themes and categories according to the degree of similarities and patterns. The data were in some cases recorded on a

computer and in the form of notes. The researcher read the data several times and verified the accurateness of the information. He also scrutinized the information to detect possible errors from the data. Then he broke the data up into manageable themes. The analysis of the data enables the researcher to understand the various constitutive elements in the data. Then he investigated the relationships between concepts and variables. The main aim of breaking data into manageable themes was also to observe patterns and trends that could be investigated.

From the above findings, the researcher understands that divorcees really are experiencing challenges that are troubling them because of not getting enough support from church members. These findings are calling the RCSA in the Vhembe District to wake up and come with ways to support divorcees through pastoral care and counselling and build the church that will also accommodate divorcees. While we agree that lack of pastoral care and counselling support in the church is a serious challenge, we must also agree that wisdom is essential while dealing with these serious challenges to avoid promoting unforgiving spirit in the church. The challenges of divorce are a serious threat for the church growth. The researcher's observations reveal that the overwhelming majority of divorcees did not become divorcees by choice or direct rebellion against God. However, most became divorcees before they were converted. Therefore, the church should consider all these factors while dealing with divorcees. Churches must understand that some of these situations may occur to anybody at any time.

The participants' opinion is that: pastoral care and counselling support is needed now. The church leadership has to be well equipping on how to treat divorcees as people, not only just as people but also as children of God in the Churches. If proper follow-ups and implementation can be done of caring and counselling divorcees, new development will take place in the church; and divorcees will feel accepted. There is a sense of urgency in dealing with this challenge because it is so easy to obtain a divorce today. One female divorcee was granted a divorce because her husband whistled and sang too much and she got tired of it! One male divorcee was granted a divorce because his wife took too large a share of blankets on their bed (Mncedisi & Nolwazi: 1999). There is a sense of urgency because the number of divorcees is growing every day were breakdown of marriages are happening even in the RCSA, and because thousands of divorcees are granted every year, and so many thousands of children suffer deeply. Is like very soon, the majority of church members in the church will be divorcees and children of divorcees if God's Word is not followed in building marriages. In

Africa, couples enter marriage with the thought, oh well, if it does not work out, we will easily get a divorce. Most participants also strongly agreed that if divorcees are supported and healed, they could contribute a lot in the church and in the building of the Kingdom of God.

Most of the participants interviewed agreed that pastoral care and counselling could bring spiritual help and emotional healing and restore courage, hope and confidence to divorcees. If the church show support, divorcees will be restored and gain confidence and be able to maximize their potential. Divorcees in the church need someone who will encourage them and assure them that they can remain in the church and render important services in spite of their challenges. They need to be cautioned that being divorced by a marriage partner is not the end of the road. They need to be encouraged to understand that they can survive those storms of life and remain effective in the Kingdom of God. Love, acceptance and restoration will always put these people together and restore their self-esteem and confidence to serve the Lord freely.

People who are hurting need support. The church should always be ready and be available to minister unto the broken hearted, including divorcees. People who are hurting also need role models for their vulnerability. Pastors and other church leaders should avail themselves and offer assistance to divorcees by bringing them together with the experienced ones who have travelled this road before them. By sharing their pains and past experiences together, these victims of fate may recover and become very useful in the ministry of the church. During the interviews with participants, it became clear that in the RCSA of Vhembe District, many congregations whose business is helping hurting divorcees ignore the challenge. What some of these churches do is to add rejection to the rejection divorced people already have. Above all, divorcees perceive themselves as failures because a relationship failed. They measure their self-value by their marriage mistakes.

During interview, divorcees who received adequate support from the church testify that they have learnt to accept their situation. Some even testify that they feel good being divorcees after having experienced dysfunctional marriages.

When the researcher assessed the testimonies and experiences shared by divorcees from different Reformed congregations in the Vhembe District, and compared the data with the responses of divorcees, he realizes that the situation in the RCSA in the Vhembe District of Limpopo; is such that

divorcees really need support. All the reports and evidences given by different participants in the interviews point to the fact that divorcees are hurting in the church and need special attention. For instance, participant 27 stated that: “It seems like the qualification for genuine church membership in the RCSA is a marital status.” Participant 29 pointed out that: “It has become the culture of all churches to have problems regarding the treatment of divorcees. I think the responses by different participants in the interviews are revealing a lot of what is going on in the RCSA today regarding pastoral care and counselling in the challenges of divorcees. However, many RCSA members in the Vhembe District are becoming aware of this challenge. Some are ready to improve the situation of divorcees and encourage them to feel accepted and to get ready even to occupy leadership positions. Of course, this does not mean that divorcees will be placed at any position without checking on them. A strong monitoring and support will be conducted to ensure that the integrity of the church is not threatened. Churches must not be judgmental and shows lack of support on divorcees.

From the researcher’ observation, the divorcees are given little respect in the church. Divorcees who got babies outside the marriage are accused of having illegitimate children, and therefore are labelled fornicators and adulterers.

According to divorcees, it is clear that many participants know that in the RCSA in the Vhembe District, pastors are ones who are expected to give support by caring and conducting counselling to divorcees who are experiencing challenges. When they hear about the divorce tragedy that happens. It is not every church member who is expected to can give support except the pastors. If the church pastor is not available to give care and counselling to divorcees, it course pain to his/her life. They know that getting support through care and counselling in times of pain is very important from the beginning. Lack of care and counselling is affecting church growth numerically, spiritually and morally.

In another interview, participant number 20, he said:

“Most of the pastors have a negative attitude towards visiting and supporting female divorcees. We are usually blamed that we cannot afford to live a holy life; we can cause pastors to fall into sexual temptations.” She agreed with participant number 21 that pastor’s wives do not want to see female divorcees close to their husbands because they are afraid that they may take their husbands from

them. He further indicated that if divorcees can be given the opportunity to participate in the full church activities, they can make a tremendous progress.”

According to my knowledge,” he said, “divorcees pay their monthly tithes and give their free will offering cheerfully.”

In conclusion, this divorcee expressed her anger and frustration, more-especially during occasions such as ‘fathers’ days’ and mother’s days. He said: “Married mothers and fathers undermine us (divorcees) very badly. They ignore our feelings. During fathers’ days and mothers’ days you will hear them saying: “Let’s run the programme fast and go and enjoy cakes and handing presents to our husbands or wives. Divorcees, you will bear with us...” This renders divorcees feel unwanted and inferior.” He concludes. “Divorcees are partially involved in the church programme, but they are used in different church structures. Where they are not permitted to play a role in most cases is when they have to preach to the entire congregation.

Following Redding’s approach of shepherding, the researcher, who was called by the Lord Jesus Christ to take care of His flock, indicates to the participants that the church is not doing enough to respond to the challenges of divorcees through pastoral care and counselling. The researcher gave words of healing to the divorcees that all human beings are equal before God.

The research finding reveals that many divorcees who are Christians in the RCSA in the Vhembe District, walk around in depression for years after a relationship has been broken. The church reaction with a trauma of divorce: During interview, all participants agreed that RCSA in the Vhembe District have difficulty with divorce, or with divorce and remarriage. The people of these churches who are having difficulty with divorcees, who are rejecting divorcees are misinterpreting what Jesus said. Jesus said, “Divorce is real, but it is not God’s perfect design for man.” These churches that never teach on divorce and address the challenges of divorcees in a Biblical way, act as if they do not know what to say. By not addressing the challenges of divorcees, they are not meeting the needs of the congregations. I am saying this, because I am not the only person who is a divorcee. Many marriages end in divorce today in churches and societies. Most churches today have hurting divorcees sitting there with many challenges. Three out of four marriages end in divorce today in most societies, which means that most congregations have hurting people sitting there

(Munroe, 2003). It is very hurtful to go through a trauma like divorce and have the people who claim to have the love of God give you a cold shoulder, the spirit of forgiveness and judging. That is not walking in the love of Jesus (Munroe, 2003). Churches that do not give care and counselling to divorcees basically say that divorce means eternal damnation, is like they are passing judgment and place condemnation on divorcees. Yes, God hates divorce, and divorce is defection or backsliding on a commitment. However, God loves the divorcee.

#### **4.15 Challenges Experienced During Data Collection**

The challenges encountered were very few. The researcher had to convince the participants that he had no secret agenda in interviewing them. In certain occasions, divorcees would be highly emotional. Pastors also in certain cases displayed some kind of anxiety. Some of them even mentioned that they were ashamed of themselves as to why they didn't treat divorcees through pastoral support as worthy church members. Other male divorcees refused to be interviewed by the researcher. Lastly, though the churches sampled around Vhembe District, are close to each other, the ones at Musina are a bit far. Some time when the researcher visits some participants knowing that we have made an appointment, when he arrives at their homes they were not available. It taxed the researcher both money and time to go for interview there.

#### **4.16 Conclusion**

This chapter presented the research findings in eleven themes: physical challenges; psychological challenges; emotional challenges; spiritual challenges; sexual challenges; children's challenges; domestic challenges; social challenges; socio-economic challenges; legal challenges and remarriage challenges. Finally, the researcher highlighted the challenges he experienced during data collection, data analysis and interpretation of the challenges. The presentation of the research findings will help us to explore the problems that serve as an obstacle to give care and counselling to the divorcees of the RCSA in the Vhembe District of Limpopo. The following chapter deals with discussions of research findings.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research findings of the study. The results in the previous chapter are discussed in this chapter. After investigating the challenges of divorcees, the researcher discovered that divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District are experiencing challenges. To gather the relevant data concerning an investigation into the challenges of divorcees regarding pastoral care and counselling, the interview guide questions were designed and asked to the divorcees who are members of these churches (see appendix D), and they positively responded to those interview guide questions. Besides the data collected from the interview guide questions asked to the divorcees, the researcher was a participant observer in many of the divorcee's conferences family enrichment conferences held by the RCSA of Vhembe District. For example, he attended many single parenting conferences, family enrichment conferences, and family services where divorcees are also there. Because he is a Church pastor, the researcher preached at some of these conferences and services of these churches. The data collected from the interview guide questions and from what the researcher observed as a participant observer in many parenting conferences and services were used in this chapter. What the researcher found is that it is very difficult for divorcees to be given pastoral care and counselling by the church pastors. Once a divorcee loses his/her marital status, he/she is viewed differently from other church members. This is particularly with regard to the way divorcees are treated in the church, they are not considered for leadership position, are rejected, discriminated against, depressed, isolated, intimidated, and threatened. Many of them do not get support from church because they are neglected.

The research deals mainly with the challenges of divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District. This research was conducted among the Reformed divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District. In some of the conferences that were organized, the researcher went there as an observer. The researchers also interviewed the sampled population groups. The researcher observed some common and similar responses in all the interviews. The participants were very excited about the project and mentioned that this research will be a revelation to the church to focus more on the challenges the

church is facing with regard to divorcees and the way they are treated in the RCSA of Vhembe District.

Therefore, the researcher in this chapter wants to present the situation as it should be according to the Pastoral care and counselling perspective as cited from pastoral care approach of shepherding following Redding's concept of caring. In addition, he will present the situation as it should be by reviewing how divorcees were treated by both the Old Testament Church and the New Testament Church. During data analysis, one main theme emerged and a description of the theme and the categories are given in detail. The following themes came from the research conducted with the participants: *Discrimination, loneliness, leadership positions, immorality, religious commitment, depression and pain, churches support, frustration associated with children of divorcees, comforting divorcee, pastoral support by churches, divorcee's conferences, divorcee's restoration, divorcee's involvement in the church activities, the partnership on pastoral care and counselling, Sunday preaching, house visitation, confession and confirmation classes, small groups services, equipping Christians for pastoral care and counselling, leadership training, pastoral care and counselling conferences, lack of pastoral care and counselling, special days celebrations, inspiration, information, interpretation, involvement, instruction, the cure of souls, prayer, hospitality, care, the RCSA in Vhembe would succeed in pastoral care and counselling, the impact of pastoral care and counselling to the divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District, money, building new houses or new home, spiritual needs, emotional needs, domestic needs, social needs, sexual needs.*

## **5.2 Research findings and interpretation**

Among other things, participants' responses revealed the following:

### **5.2.1 Discrimination.**

The majority of interviewees testified that divorcees are indeed discriminated against. Some divorcees indicate that discrimination is caused mainly by fear from church members who fear that divorcees may break their families. This was confirmed by participant number 8, who said that,

*“in one of the family conference it was spoken that divorcees cannot be trusted because they are vulnerable since most of them live in loneliness. Most of them take advantage of tricking other church members into adultery.”*

### **5.2.2 Loneliness.**

Participant number 2 revealed that discrimination of divorcees contributes much toward their loneliness. Divorcees interviewed at Mvudi RCSA (Ha-Budeli) also testified that they feel lonely. This loneliness (they say) is caused by lack of acceptance and support by the church. Many divorcees interviewed from different settings confirm that loneliness is a major concern among divorcees in the church. Some of them even indicate that they feel unaccepted in the church. They further indicate that sometimes they are strongly tempted to leave the church. Reports have been given to pastors that certain divorcees stay away from formal church meetings because they felt unwanted. Divorcees cried that they feel inferior because they are undermined because of their marital status.

During the divorced conference held at Mukumbani RCSA some divorcees vented their anger and frustration saying that they expected pastors and church elders to give them support, but in the majority of divorcees who are experiencing challenges, church members displayed more negative attitude toward them. Many female divorcees interviewed point out that pastors' wives are jealousy, and prevent their husbands (pastors) to offer counselling to them. Participant number 8 told the researcher that even where pastors are willing to give counselling to female divorcees who are still alone, they find it very difficult because they are accused and blamed that they fall in love with them during counselling sessions, this was said during a family conference.

### **5.2.3 Leadership positions.**

All the divorced participants who were interviewed at Matondoni RCSA indicated that it is as if the church is not happy if divorcees occupy leadership positions in the church. Participant number 4 told the researcher that it is difficult for the church to elect a divorcee to occupy a leadership position.

### **5.2.4 Immorality.**

Many participants interviewed at Lunungwi RCSA indicated that some church members they had problems with divorcees' morality. Most participants also indicate that there are church members

who are very suspicious of divorcees' morality. They mention that there have been many critical cases in the church in line with this issue. For instance, participant number 10 told the researchers that there are certain female divorcees who fell in love with other members of the church. During interview with participant number 10, she indicated that most divorcees suddenly commit adultery shortly after divorce if pastoral care and counselling support is not provided by the church.

### **5.2.5 Religious commitment.**

Many participants who were interviewed indicated that if good pastoral care and counselling support were given to them, as church members, they would be committed both spiritually and financially; they would attend prayer meetings and conferences without obstacles. Many participants in the research point out that divorcees also have skills and talents that they can display in building of the Kingdom of God in the RCSA of Vhembe District.

### **5.2.6 Depression and pain.**

During the interviews, many of the divorcees who were interviewed by the researcher revealed that divorcees live in pain and depression. Most divorcees participating in the interviews in different conferences, e.g. at Mvudi RCSA and Gondeni RCSA, indicated that they live in pain and depression because of the painful challenges and experiences they are going through. As victims of divorce, they stated that the trauma brought by these challenges and experiences is endless. They also relate the pain of living with anger and shame after divorce or rejection. According to the findings in this research, divorcees are also burdened by the responsibility of taking care of their fatherless and motherless children. Some participants understand that this burden can be lessened by the pastoral care and counselling from the church pastors, church elders, and church members. The challenge of the children raised by the mother figure of father figure only is both economically and morally. Many participants who were interviewed by the researcher revealed to researcher that it is very difficult to forgive their spouses after divorce. Participant number 4 indicated that the pain is more exacerbated by the jealousy that burns through me when I see my divorced marriage partner with her new lover.

Participant number 26 indicated that

*“...being divorced is very painful and become worse if I have to attend the same church with my divorced partner. It is also difficult if we work with the same institution.”*

During the interviews divorcees revealed that the trauma of divorce also affects their children badly. One participant point out to the researcher that

*“My children get more frustrated and angry when they see their father in the company of a new wife.”*

Another divorcee confirms that

*“It is true that there is pain and anger that is displayed by children when they watch strange children enjoying the benefits that belong to them.”*

As a researcher, after collecting data from participants, I discovered that many divorcees end up in depression. Another divorcee, a victim of divorce vented her anger about a man who destroyed her virginity and walked out on her, leaving her with an unwanted baby.

The majority of the interviewees mention that even if one does well financially, it is still very frustrating to raise the fatherless and motherless children alone. All children need a father and mother figure. When asked how this affects their church life, most divorcees report that their challenges and experiences left them with a sense of guilt and self-condemnation. They indicated to the researcher that they live in shame; they feel inferior and cannot enjoy fruitful Christianity because they live with guilt, anger, bitterness, frustration, jealousy and unforgiving spirit.

### **5.2.7 Church support.**

The majority of divorcees that were interviewed strongly agree that pastoral care and counselling support from churches was lacking, though it was needed to give divorcees support in their challenges that they are going through. They confess that experiences of divorce and loss of relationship leave them deeply wounded, physically, psychologically and spiritually. Divorcees who were interviewed strongly agree that the church needs to come with some strategies that will ensure strong pastoral care and counselling support for divorcees. Divorcees who were interviewed

indicated to the researcher that the trauma that follows sudden divorce leave them so vulnerable and miserable that they really need pastoral care and counselling support from fellow church members who understand their tough and painful situation. They complained that very often they are left alone. All divorcees who were interviewed by the researcher strongly supported the idea of developing an approach to pastoral care and counselling that would be relevant in the emotional healing of the divorcees to support divorcees. Participants indicated that they lacked support in their church communities, making it difficult to keep divorcees coping with challenges. One participant indicated:

*“I have serious problems with a lack of church support, especially when I don’t see church members.*

Another participant further narrates as follows:

*“After divorce, as a father of two daughters, I didn’t attend family conference, because I don’t have a wife. Always in the church I am like a visitor, what the church has only done to me is to suspend me from church activities, I don’t participate in church programmes, and I don’t eat Holy Communion. It takes 4 years since I was suspended because of divorce. I am available in the church. The church is failing to support me with counselling. Even my children are struggling, no one come to counsel me and my children.”*

Support is an important thing for every divorcee. It enables one to cope with the challenges of divorce. Without support, challenges cannot be readily prevented. This is particularly dangerous to divorcee’s everyday life. Coping with divorce challenges is important to the challenges of divorcees as they help divorcees. The divorcees feel guilty and hopeless because they know that lack of pastoral care and counselling support is not helping divorcees to feel comfort and coping with challenges. Lack of support causes the divorcees emotional pain because they may not be able to receive pastoral care and counselling they wishes to. Lack of pastoral care and support also puts a physical strain on the divorcees.

Not all the church communities meet this standard, particularly in the RCSA of Vhembe District where the research was conducted. Divorcees have to be given pastoral care and counselling always. The RCSA order encouraged church pastors to care for the church members (including divorcees).

This is their way of giving care and counselling support to divorcees. Lack of caring counselling to divorcees who are experiencing challenges in an African context is painful and frustrating.

### **5.2.8 Frustration associated with children of divorcees.**

Participants are saddened by the fact that their children frustrated. The challenges that they are experiencing also frustrate their children. One divorcee indicated that: Children are frustrated because of the challenges that I am experiencing. I do not understand why things are in this way in life. My children's do not know who to follow between the two of us as parents "father and mother,"

*"When my son found out that I and his father are divorced, he was unable to go to school; these things touched him a lot, he became frustrated. And it is worse here at home because he do not want to play with other boys because he is afraid that they will say bad words to him and laugh at him."*

### **5.2.9 Comforting divorcees.**

Before one can be a comforter through pastoral care and counselling, participants revealed that he/she must understand divorcees who are in need of his/her care and counselling comfort. Divorcees long for the assurance that someone else understands them: They feel that no one cares and no one comprehends their pain and sorrow. Too often, the custodial parent is unable or unwilling to listen to their burdens. Those who help should be one who listens and encourages. Parental separation leaves divorcees feeling unwanted and rejected. In their eyes, pastors and church members have abandoned them. All divorcees need to be loved, but the divorce experience intensifies that need. They need complete acceptance, support and unconditional love from their pastors and church mates. Too often, their need to feel loved is not met. These divorcee hungers for a sense of security. Divorce leaves their children unsure of their parents' love and sceptical of what will happen tomorrow. Divorcees have lost their house, neighbours, and friends are especially insecure. They feel they are unwanted and because of a lack of support, they feel they do not fit in. A divorcee's church environment is the key to his adjustment to divorce. Unfortunately, the fallout of divorce leaves most divorcees in turmoil and confusion. They are desperate, and their life is unsettled. Divorce produces a world of emotional chaos. Most divorcees need help sorting out their anger, bitterness, loneliness, fear, and deep sadness. Without the church support, help of others, some divorcee will spend a

lifetime struggling with battered emotions. It is not unusual for divorcees from broken homes to struggle with a damaged self-esteem. They often live in homes where their feelings of worth and importance have been greatly diminished. To properly adjust, these feelings will have to be reversed. Divorcees need to be supported by church members, family and friends. They need someone to help them understand their own value and importance in light of how God values them. They are looking for someone to help them in their challenges and pressures that divorce brings. They wanted the church to help them by comforting them, supporting them, accepting them, and integrating them into the church.' After divorce, custodial parents must stabilize their own lives so they can effectively lead their single family. If the parent is stumbling, his children will also falter. More than anything else, they need God's assistance. True believers must pray for God to work on behalf of these divorcees. Unfortunately, the few people who support divorcees from broken homes are usually unbelievers (Ayenkeye: 1991). As such, they cannot address spiritual needs with biblical guidance. Human solutions apart from God's help will, at best, only bring temporary results. Many divorcees struggle. The apostle Paul gave the following challenge to every believer, "While we have opportunity, let us do well to all men and especially to those who are of the household of God" (Galatians 6:10). Divorcees in a local church need to experience the love of God's people. The Practice of supporting divorced Christians must recognize the needs of divorcees and understand their responsibility to meet those needs. Yet, ministering to others is not an exercise of the mind. Genuine ministry always involves individual people sharing their lives with other people and their painful challenges.

#### **5.2.10 Pastoral support by churches.**

During interview with participants, divorcees indicated that church members are absent from the support offered to divorcees through pastoral care and counselling is. Since church members do not understand divorce and lack skills, many divorcees indicated that the involvement of church members in care and counselling divorcees is poor. The researcher asked one of divorcees who indicated that there is poor involvement of church members in pastoral care and counselling of the church. A divorcee told the researcher that most of the people who are involved in supporting divorcees are relatives. He further indicated that church members are less involved in supporting divorcees. He was concerned that all members must commit themselves to care and counsel divorcees.

The RCSA should support divorcees through pastoral care and counselling, which will help divorcees to cope with their painful challenges. During interview with participants, many divorcees confirmed to the researcher that if divorcees are supported, they could also benefit the RCSA in a manner that these churches can grow.

Many divorcees confirm that divorcees are not free to contribute to the building of their churches because of a lack of pastoral care and counselling. Therefore, the researcher agrees with participants as indicated in chapter 2 and other sections that the church should support divorcees through pastoral care and counselling so that divorcees can cope and share their personal experiences. Pastor and church leadership should come together and give support to heal divorcees to cope with their situations. The RCSA should rather be a part of the solution to divorcees than to be a part of the problem. The information from different participants confirm that if divorcees can be given adequate pastoral care and counselling support and opportunity to participate in church activities, divorcees will contribute a lot to the growth of the churches. Participants advised the churches to come with the ways of supporting them to cure the souls of the divorcees. RCSA have a task care and counsel divorcees who are often rejected, isolated, discriminated and threatened by other church members. Most of the divorcees interviewed support the view that pastors of the RCSA who are filled with God's compassion and caring should offer assistance to the divorcees. If checked, pastoral care and counselling practices can bring cure and emotional healing and restore, hope and confidence to the divorcees who are having challenges. Some participants revealed that churches should develop the attitude of caring and counselling divorcees to help them gain confidence and getting hope for the future. Divorcees in the RCSA need church members who will encourage them to follow the Lord and exercise their gifts in spite of their challenges. They are waiting for people who can come to them with the words of comfort, i.e. words such as "Divorce is not the end of the world." Divorcees need to be encouraged to understand that they can pass those challenges and remain effective in serving the Lord in the RCSA.

According to Marguardt (2005:17), divorcees need people who can come to them and tell them that our loving God does not wish that we remain mired down in the destructive emotional, psychological and spiritual fallout associates with divorce. Larson (1990), for instance, tells of one woman who was deeply wounded and hurt after the divorce was followed by an organ transplant. This woman was so depressed that she almost died. However, when the trained group in the church ministered to

her she soon recovered. The support group advised her that she should learn to cope with this crisis situation and face life without her husband, surrender everything to God and live on. They also advised her on how to cope with her ill health. People who are hurting need support. The church should always be ready and be available to minister unto the broken hearted, including divorcees. Participants asked that pastors and leaders should be available to offer support to divorcees, and to share their pain and challenges. Divorcees are in need of caring and counselling. In the book of Galatians 6: 2 we read: “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.” It is the duty of the RCSA in the Vhembe District to train the church members to live according to this scripture. Paul teaches the church about the power of unity. He says that the church is the body of Christ. If we are really the body, it means that no one should be isolated. We should learn to practice brotherly kindness and show one another mercy at all the times. Therefore, divorcees should be supported in their troubles and their challenges.

During one interview, a divorcee indicated that she used to live with guilt and confessed that she was always feeling shameful, rejected and miserable. However, a lack of pastoral support kept her from participating in church activities. Many pastoral researchers strongly believe that divorcees need church support. Makhubele (2009) indicates that children raised in divorcee families need interventions from the office of Social Development and Welfare to make sure that there is order and discipline for the children. The church is called to play a major role of providing care and counselling to divorcees. The emotional and spiritual welfare of these children, living with a divorcee only, is also the RCSA’s responsibility. The church should make sure that divorcees and their children are valued and are worthy to be accepted. It is the duty of the church to accept them. Maston and Tillian (1983) point out that the Biblical family has a duty to promote the Kingdom of God on earth. The church should provide understanding, love and companionship for all its members, including divorced parents. The church should strive to come with some strategies to remedy brokenness in divorcees. It is obvious that divorcees have been hurt by divorce, rejection, and all other causes of their parental status.

During the interview with one of the participant, he indicated that members of the RCSA usually accommodate normal parenting involving a “father and mother.” Some members see being divorced as a result of sin and this is why the church fails to tolerate divorcees and rejects, isolates, discriminates against them and threaten them. He continued to say that if the RCSA in Vhembe offer

pastoral care and counselling to divorcees, divorcees can cope with their challenges of life despite the hardships that they are facing, i.e. hardships such as financial difficulties, and raising children alone. During this interview, the researcher discovered that many divorcees agreed that financially they are struggling, and the church keeps quiet about their situations and the challenges they are facing. Another divorcee indicated that the church needs to take into serious consideration of the trauma of divorcees who fear that their situation may remain permanent.

Some divorcees in the RCSA of Vhembe have remarried; some are thinking remarrying. The researcher found that their challenge is that it is not easy to meet someone who is suitable and emotionally stable to trust. Another challenge that was revealed during interview is financial security. What is more, many Reformed divorcees who are still living alone prefer to meet a new marriage partner who has been born again.

The reflection of Christian commitment in the RCSA in the Vhembe District is not good, there is still more work of teaching all church members to fulfil their full commitment of supporting divorcees, especially in home visits by pastors and church elders. Christians should know that Christ called them from the world, not because of their good works or by being righteous, but because of His grace. In addition, He called them for a purpose, to be servants of the message of caring and counselling to divorcees. This is clearly indicated by Adams (1974) who indicated that the pastor must not neglect the body. The pastor is called to the work of the shepherding and feeding the flock of God. As pastor is not called to evangelize. It is not the shepherds, but sheep that make more sheep. Shepherds care for them. It is the job of a pastor to equip, train, and feed the flock. But as one of the sheep of God which he is too, he also must evangelize; and as an example to the flock he is to take the lead in evangelizing.

#### **5.2.11 Divorcee conferences.**

It is the plea of this thesis that the RCSA of Vhembe District must not isolate divorcees; it should organize their conferences where they can express themselves and share personal experiences. It is the responsibility of the church to show the love of Jesus to all church members. In these conferences, divorcees can be helped to grow spiritually, financially, educationally, etc. According to participants, these conferences should cover various subjects that will help divorcees and encourage them to face

different challenges of life. Divorcees would be taught about the responsibility to raise their children on their own and to pay their primary, secondary, and tertiary education. They can also be encouraged to gain confidence and to have spiritual growth. They can be taught how to completely trust in Jesus. They can also be encouraged to build strong friendship with other RCSA members.

During interview with participants, the researcher discovered that most divorcees have lost their dignity and identity the time divorce happens. However, when they are given pastoral care and counselling support, not only their dignity will be restored, but also their identity in Christ will be restored. In these conferences, divorcees must be encouraged to know that their self-worth and personal identity depend only on God, not on anybody, or on marital status. They will be encouraged to understand that their future and comfort is in the hands of God. God will always be with them to give them support.

During interview with participants, the researcher discovered that divorcees who received pastoral care and counselling support from church conferences testify that they have learnt to accept their challenges and their situation. Some even testify to the researcher that they feel good being divorced after having experienced dysfunctional marriages. A certain divorcee told the researcher that taking part these conferences have taught her that she would rather be alone than have another failed relationship. She revealed that the divorcees also encouraged to go on outings together, to attend picnics, walks, and camps. They are empowered to use their various skills and trained to run small businesses. She said that the one that she attended at Ha-Budeli RCSA equipped divorcees to run profitable projects, like poultry farming. By getting pastoral care in this way, the burden of the divorcee is lifted, especially the burden of taking care of their children financially. They no longer feel alone.

According to the researcher, after having interviews with the participants, he agreed with what he discovered from the participants because the Bible indicates very clearly that the church must build the faith of church members, including the divorcees. There must be conferences in the church that will cater for the needs of divorcees. The church must also realize the value of divorcees in the church. So the church should be discouraged from rejecting divorcees who are experiencing painful challenges. Instead, the church should be very supportive to divorcees and recognize them as part of God's flock. The RCSA of Vhembe District must remember that the good shepherd left 99 sheep to

search for the one that was lost. This means that every member is very important to the master. While drawing annual church programmes the church should allocate time to cover divorcees as well. The researcher has already indicated that most divorcees have confessed that they have stopped attending some worship services and attending family conferences because they feel isolated, discriminated, threatened and neglected.

The church is called to show concern for divorcees and their challenges. The apostle Paul quoted from Exodus 33:19 in the letter to the Romans to encourage the church to show divine favour to the disadvantaged ones, namely widows. The same Bible that rebukes sin also shows a way of mercy, grace and forgiveness. Therefore, the church should encourage and assist single mothers to seek for mercy and forgiveness from God. After their repentance, divorcees should be restored and offered an opportunity to render services unto God freely. Divorcees' workshops and conferences should be arranged where divorcees may share personal experiences and enjoy fellowship with one another. This will instil in divorcees a sense of belonging. It should be the mission of the church to recognize and include divorcees in the church activities.)

A Family Enrichment Conference held at Mukumbani on the 21<sup>st</sup> of February 2016 revealed that there is a great concern for divorcees in the church because they are being neglected. The conference speaker indicated that it is the duty of pastors in the church to teach and train members to accept and love divorcees. At the same conference, it was agreed that conferences and workshops should be organized for divorcees. Another participant indicated that a good approach should be used while inviting divorcees to these conferences. This is because it is sometimes very stressful for them to attend such conferences. If not well handled, these conferences tend to trigger their trauma, because they remind them of their marital status and very often, their nasty experiences. She said that churches must not only organize conferences and functions for the couples. Divorcees too should be given more attention. The RCSA should learn to focus on divorcees.

As stated above, there are many divorcees in the RCSA of Vhembe District who have the desire, time and skills to bring about a tremendous progress in the RCSA. These highly skilled divorcees can also do well in leadership positions. Prayer meetings can be used effectively to encourage divorcees in the church. It is the duty of the church to identify talented divorcees and train them to host various events for other divorcees. Activities such as Bible studies and home cells do not

necessarily call for marital status. Divorcees can initiate and conduct these church activities successfully.

#### **5.2.12 Divorcees' restoration.**

In the earlier chapter of this research project, it was indicated that the number of divorcees is growing in the RCSA of Vhembe District. Moreover, because of high rate of divorce, divorcees outnumber their married counter parts in the church. This increases the need for the church to support and accept divorcees in the church activities. When issues of discrimination based on marital status are not effectively confronted, church growth and effectiveness will decline. Divorcees and their children suffer tremendously as victims of discrimination in the church. The RCSA up to now has done very little to address this and offer support to divorcees.

There is no doubt that divorcees do not live right, in the RCSA many of them are suffering from severe discrimination. If divorcees do not live right, this causes them great damage. The church as a whole also suffers. It affects their children as well. So the church is advised to teach all members and church leaders to change this negative mind set. Divorcees should be supported and involved in different church activities. They must be encouraged to run projects and programmes in the church. Those with outstanding skills and abilities should be given opportunities to get involved in the various committees as well. In my opinion, divorcees should be supported pastorally, healed, and cured to cultivate high self-esteem; and be committed to the services of the Lord in the church. If they feel accepted and wanted, they in turn will master self-esteem and self-control and live right. It is also the duty of the church to bring the ministry of pastoral care and counselling to all people.

Most divorcees have lost hope, and they need the church to give support into them and a sense of hope for the future because they live in despair. The role of the church to do so is closely related to its involvement in various processes and efforts to finish their challenges as divorcees in the church. However, pastors should be very careful dealing with these challenges, taking into serious consideration that there may be divorcees in the church who are not living right, and who may misunderstand the grace bestowed upon them for license to continue living in sin. There might also be circumstances such as divorce and remarriage or where single mothers are promoting immorality. Conferences should be so organized taking into serious consideration the fact that most divorcees

have been traumatized. Special attention and care should be given while dealing with them. Their behaviour in most cases is a result of the trauma they have suffered. Therefore, the church should not always jump into conclusion that their morals are questionable. Some of these behavioural tendencies are symptoms of the trauma to which they have been subjected. Most people, who have suffered from trauma look like everyone else. The difference surfaces when they are faced with real challenges and pressures. They need someone to restore and motivate them. This will enable them to understand that God's grace is sufficient for them. Of course, dealing with divorcees in the church is highly critical and challenging. I have seen divorcees who are highly committed to the service of the Lord. They give cheerfully. They pray and work hard. They benefit the church with their offerings and services, but at the same time they, tarnish the image of the church by practicing immorality. Therefore, the pastor needs to use wisdom while dealing with divorcees of the opposite sex in the church.

Another factor to be taken into serious consideration while dealing with the restoration of divorcees, and to involve them in the church programme. The role of the church should be to provide varied opportunities to all church members. The church must also establish cell groups that are formed according to different skills and talents, not necessarily based on gender issues, or marital status. Days and time for attendance may be allocated to allow specific people groups according to their skills and talents. Certain days will cater for instance, for those who will do say, singing or cooking, etc. In this way, various skills will be developed while on the other hand divorcees find the chance to socialize with others. Their skills will also benefit them to participate in the community projects as well. This will enable single mothers to maintain their dignity and self-esteem. When the RCSA of Vhembe District stages functions, pastors and other church leadership should make sure that divorcees are also included.

The role of pastors and the entire church leadership is to take care of the sheep in the body of Christ. All members are equally important and significant before the Lord. They have all been equally redeemed. Therefore, the church should take initiative to arrange for and facilitate the social activities for divorcees. God commands the church to look after the sheep. Divorcees should also be advised to inter-act with legal and financial advisers so that they can be well informed pertaining to legal issues and financial management, issues that are very important today. For instance, divorcees are free to make a choice on how to spend their money. The marketing agencies have already taken

advantage of this economic impact that divorcees make. Research shows that the marketing agency has now shifted their focus and efforts to divorcees. Many of the segments of the market, housing, food, banking, retail, and many others are managed and monitored by divorcees. Divorcees are also more likely to own homes, purchase luxury items and take more frequent trips (Koons & Anthony, 1991). The church also like business and marketing agencies should take advantage of the impact that divorcees make in the public industry. Every pastor longs for and desires church growth. Divorcees can contribute a lot to church growth both numerically and financially. The church may be a wonderful home for divorcees. In Luke 4: 18 we read: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because He has anointed me to preach the Gospel...” Commenting on this verse, T.D. Jakes (1993), points out that “approximately five out of ten marriages end in divorce.” He further indicates that these broken marriages and homes leave victims with broken dreams that were never fulfilled and children living in a terrible nightmare of facing life without a father figure and a mother figure in the house. The church needs to intervene and offer support to divorcees who are experiencing challenges.

Through the ministry of the church, the master himself will heal these disadvantaged ones. Instead of emphasizing guilt and condemnation, it is high time that the church must preach the Good News. The Gospel (Good News) is the grace of God whereby we were saved. The church is a home for all. We have in the church wounded and hurting people. The church’s primary task and duty is to provide chances and opportunities of salvation and healing to all the people. The church must continuously follow the footsteps of the master. Jesus’ ministry focused on people who are hurting. He never neglected anyone who was hurting. He healed them all. In fact, it is Jesus who said that it is the sick that needs a physician. On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the health who need a doctor, but the sick. (Matt. 9: 12-13).” Likewise, the church should understand that we are called to care and cure those who are in pain. The church’s ministry is that of healing and restoration. Jesus surrounded Himself with broken, bleeding, and unclean people. It is the pastor’s duty to convince people with past nasty experiences that regardless of past failures they must not give up. Even divorcee should come to Jesus.

In His earthly ministry, Jesus encouraged all people struggling with sins and heavy burdens to come to him. It is said that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute. However, Jesus was moved with compassion for her and He restored her dignity. Jakes (1993) says that the church is the place where you can

come broken and disgusted, and be healed, delivered and set free in the name of Jesus. The ministry of the Holy Spirit through the church is to call for the broken and hurting individuals, including single mothers to come to Jesus. He will heal and restore them. It is in the church that all people can hear the Good News and live. The church should give all people strength and nourishment. The church is to be the place where we share our burdens and allow others to help us with them. The Spirit calls all that are weary and heavy laden to come to Jesus, the physician of infinite ability; and they will find rest. The Bible admonishes the church to minister to the widows and orphans. I believe God wants the church to minister to divorcees as well. If the church gives support to divorcees, the church is obeying God. By supporting those who are hurting, the church is showing that we are aware of the fact that what happened to others, (their losses) might happen to us as well, and that we also will need support.

### **5.2.13 Divorcees' involvement in the church activities.**

During interview, one participant indicated that divorcees have contributed a lot in the ministry of the church. They helped a church in different areas of operation, e.g. in mission campaign, in teaching Sunday school class faithfully, in leading church choirs, in composing and writing church songs, in cleaning church building and church yard, etc. She indicated that the church leadership should remember that God has always building His church by all church members including divorcees, even today he is still building His Kingdom by all church members. In mission work, some divorcees can only be effectively reached by divorcees. Therefore, if churches exclude divorcees to participate in evangelism, the work will slow down, because today the rate of divorce is growing every day in the church. If the church leadership could support and accommodate divorcees to participate in the ministry according to areas of their giftedness and calling, and not because of their marriage background, the church will grow well.

The researcher have observed that divorcees have many challenges that depend on economic and social structures, they share basic similarities, concerning family relationships and the raising of children. Some challenges are emanating from social and economic problems that affect people today. If divorcees are granted equal opportunities, they can bring about some positive influence, not only in the church, but also in the whole community. In my opinion, divorcees need pastoral support from the church. The church should repent from looking at divorcees as less people. If the church

supports divorcees through pastoral care and counselling, they will have personal growth and they will see themselves as important church members. They will also have the freedom to pursue friendships all church members, and they can contribute a lot to church growth. Therefore, the church is advised to support divorcees to help divorcees to participate freely in church activities such as music, mass choirs, intercession, and Bible study and group prayer meetings. Some divorcees have many opportunities and advantages. They have unique challenges to meet because they must adjust to making decisions on their own to raise a family without a mate. The church is expected to provide pastoral care and counselling support to divorcees and making them feel welcome in the RCSA activities. The church must organize their meetings where they can come together to can discuss and share the challenges they experience in their lives. Such support can help them acquire the necessary self-confidence to be active and productive members of the church. Another participant indicated to the researcher that as a divorcee she is becoming more visible and more intimately engaged in the local community than in the church. She is bringing changes in politics in her area. She said that, the church too, should involve divorcees to its activities. Churches that are not using the gifts of divorcees in the church activities must realize that the community is using their gifts, talents and ability. The needs and concerns of divorcees with regard to pastoral care and counselling in the church should be given a serious consideration by both the church leadership and Pastors in the RCSA in the Vhembe District. The church must recognize and value divorcees' lives and significance. In this research, the church is called to follow the footsteps of the master. Jesus' ministry is a good example of encounters with different types of single people, including divorcees. In his earthly ministry, Jesus didn't reject people, He didn't isolate and discriminate people. He valued all church members. RCSA leadership and church members all know that Jesus came to bring beauty for ashes and to bind up the broken hearted. So the RCSA is called upon to reflect the heart of Jesus to divorcees. The church should display the attitude that Christ had on all members of His church. This is the attitude of compassion and kindness. The church should support divorcees in a practical way that does not ignore their daily needs. Challenges that they face in life are real and practical, and need realistic and practical solutions. That is why they should be guided in ways whereby they can be able to meet their daily needs without drifting away from Christian living. The church should commit itself to pastoral care and counselling which will help divorcees. In this way, they will learn how to do practical jobs to meet their daily needs. This will also promote their confidence to feel valued, significant and wanted.

#### **5.2.14 The partnership on pastoral care and counselling.**

According to Kirk (1999), ‘partnership belongs to the essence of the church: partnership is not so much what the Church does as what it is. Churches (theologically) belong to one another, for God has called each ‘into the fellowship (*koinonia*) of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord’ (1 Cor 1:9). Pastors of the RCSA in the Vhembe District often meet once a month to discuss about church matters and praying about those matters. These meetings are where partnership on pastoral care and counselling can flow from there to their local churches. These meetings of pastors will be a wakeup call for the congregations to support divorcees who are experiencing many challenges. According to the researcher, the matter of pastoral care and counselling to divorcees is an agent and a serious call for the RCSA in the Vhembe District. During interview with participants, one divorcee indicated that church council members must start vigorously to understand and see the necessity of pastoral care and counselling to divorcees especially in the Vhembe District. This should be so because there are many divorcees who are continually cry from the depths of their challenges and of their suffering and hopelessness. Pastors of these churches also do have conferences where their members attend together, and it is in their conferences where the matter of the lack of pastoral care and counselling to divorcees who are experiencing challenges can be highlighted as one of the most important challenges. If the RCSA in the Vhembe District do pastoral care and counselling, those Churches can have a tremendous growing.

#### **5.2.15 Sunday preaching.**

During interview, one divorcee indicated that it would be good if church members can be taught in Sunday services about Jesus love and care to the people who are in painful situations. According to Mutavhatsindi (2008), preaching is the most important tool to change the hearts of people. Through Sunday preaching, one can lead people to a spiritually bright future. This can also help the RCSA in the Vhembe District church leaders and church members who are asking themselves this question “What must we do to change the church thinking of divorcees?” In the Sunday preaching is where a pastor can prepare his message in such a way that through his message, God touches the hearts of the people, and bring changes. This is what the preaching should do: it must change peoples’ hearts, lifestyle and behaviour. Pastors can preach the Word of God by the way one can feel that he is preaching what he knows and not his own message, but God’s message of caring and counselling

divorcees. On Sundays, sermons on the pulpit will have to be well organized, written and preached in an understandable language that everybody in the church understands. These pastors will have to take preaching about caring divorcees as a serious and important obligation to be faithfully done in the church services. They will have to know that the power of changing the hearts, minds and behaviour of people is by preaching. If Christians read the Bible, they will find that Jesus took preaching seriously, as did the apostles and the early Church. The Risen Lord said quite unequivocally to the disciples: “Proclaim the Good News to all creation” (Mk 16:15) (NIV). Peter and John testified before the Sanhedrin: “We cannot keep quiet. We must speak about what we have seen and heard” (Ac 4:20) (NCV). It was a matter of course for the newly converted Paul to preach “boldly and open in the name of Jesus” and to bear witness to Him (Ac 9:27). When Paul claimed the honorary title “apostle,” he understood himself as “herald” (*praecox*), that is, the official announcer of Good News. He is a servant of the Good News (Rm. 15:16; Col 1:23). He calls himself “herald, apostle and teacher” of the Gospel (2 Tm 1:11) (Müller, 1987). Anyone who has experienced the full power of the Christ-event should feel a compulsion to cry out this event just like the Apostle of the Gentiles; like Paul, Christians should feel the duty laid upon them: “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel” (1 Cor. 9:16).

#### **5.2.16 House visitation.**

Churches should have a group of members committed to and involved in pastoral visitation. These members will also give help to those who are in painful situations. House visitation is the other thing that will bring success in pastoral care and counselling to divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District. The researcher still remembers the day he was discussing with one of the divorcee; he said that if divorcees were given care and counselling by house visiting, churches would grow. House visitation to divorcees during the week, during weekends and holidays will be a blessing to these churches. House visitation will be important in these churches. One divorcee indicated that if the leaders of the RCSA in the Vhembe District take house visitation to divorcees as importance, the challenges of divorcees would change from pain into blessings. He indicates that divorcees should be visited at home frequently. Hadaway adds to what the RCSA in the Vhembe District is doing concerning house visitation by saying that: The concept of visitation should be expanded beyond showing up at someone’s front door for an appointment or an unannounced. If churches are not visiting divorcees who are experiencing challenges, decline will be on those churches. Churches that

have few visitors should start with those divorcees they do have and develop ways to attract others. Various forms of pastoral care and counselling practices can all be used to draw visitors and develop a list of viable prospects. The names are wasted, however, if they are not followed up quickly (Hadaway, 1991).

#### **5.2.17 Confession and confirmation classes.**

The divorcees of RCSA of Vhembe District realized that for people to have faith, more knowledge of the Bible, and the Reformed doctrine, they must be instructed. One divorcee who was interviewed by the researcher indicated that those people who came to this church for the first time, who will have to profess their faith after attending the confession and confirmation classes must be encouraged to care for the divorcees. They will be taught the Heidelberg Catechism and Reformed doctrines. Those who will be teaching the confession classes will also be instructed so that they can conduct classes well. After the examination of the class members and baptism to become members of this congregation, caring of divorcees will also be expected from them.

#### **5.2.18 Small groups' services.**

The other thing that could be used to prepare the RCSA of Vhembe District is small groups' services. This was confirmed by one divorcee who indicated that her spiritual life was developed by involving herself in small groups' services organized by the church. These small groups are cell groups in some of the wards, women services and men services. They are to be done during the week where church members rotate in the homes of church members, including those homes of divorcees (Hadaway et al. 1987). The programmes of the RCSA of Vhembe District include Bible Studies, topic discussions, and singing. Many of the participants who answered interview questions guide indicated that in their fellowship centres small groups' services are excluding divorcees. This means that the divorcees of those fellowship centres are missing fellowship in small groups. The church should not exclude divorcees in small groups' services, as these services are essential for the growth of those fellowship centres, and the growth of the entire congregation. A great church is one that has a good fellowship among its members. It gives a living demonstration that the essential nature of a church is a fellowship in Christ. This kind of fellowship is essential for any church to experience a degree of success. With this fellowship, almost any obstacle can be overcome. Without this fellowship, the

church is severely handicapped, if not doomed (Young, 1978). The fellowship of church members is based on their fellowship with Christ. Just as there is a bond of love between the individual believer and his Lord, so there is also a bond of love that unites believer with believer.

#### **5.2.19 Equipping Christians for pastoral care and counselling.**

In Luke 9:1-17, Jesus prepares His disciples to send them out for service. He takes them through three stages: a plunge into the community, interrupted, and learning through doing. These three stages are essential for the Christians to prepare themselves for true leadership for transformation (Bruwer, 2001). To be true to calling the RCSA of Vhembe District must realize that the members of the church needed to be equipped and trained for the task of pastoral care and counselling to divorcees. This would be done through leadership training, conferences, and Bible studies.

#### **5.2.20 Leadership training.**

During the interviews, one participant indicated that equipping church members for pastoral care and counselling practices begins with the vision of the RCSA pastors and the church leadership. The leadership of the church must have a commitment to mobilize the church for caring and counselling divorcees. The people do not go beyond their leaders in knowledge and zeal, nor surpass them in consecration and sacrifice. The RCSA pastors must hold the divinely appointed office for inspiring and guiding the thought and activities of the churches. By virtue of his position, they can be a mighty force in the caring and counselling of divorcees. Leadership that follows the instructions of the Bible brings the church to the spirit of caring and counselling of divorcees. In the RCSA in the Vhembe District, pastors must also equip and motivate church leaders for pastoral care and counselling practices. Many conferences will have to organize to equip members. This was confirmed by one divorcee who answered interview questions guide. He indicated that training must not only be theoretical teachings, but was also to be implemented when pastoral house visits are undertaken. Equipping church members for pastoral care and counselling practices is very important in equipping church members so that they can use the spiritual gifts that God gave them. It is wise to prepare church members in the use of their particular gifts as part of the training component. Training will assist the growth of the individual. Churches should keep in mind that there are areas of pastoral in which all Christians should be involved, such as caring for divorcees.

### **5.2.21 Pastoral care and counselling conferences.**

One of the mandates given to the RCSA in the Vhembe District is to organize pastoral care and counselling practices (Du Plooy, 2003). This was clearly confirmed by many divorcees responding to the questions that appeared in the interview questions guide, which says, “What are your challenges regarding pastoral care and counselling that are to be addressed in pastoral conferences in the RCSA in the Vhembe District? In answering the above questions, they indicated that, there are many challenges. The primary purposes of such pastoral conferences are to develop their pastoral vision, to motivate members for pastoral as well as to share experiences on how to do pastoral care and counselling practices in the Vhembe District. The primary aims of the pastoral conferences to divorcees will be to clarify the RCSA about pastoral vision, plans, and objectives and motivate a passion for pastoral care and counselling to divorcees; also to make sure that they strengthen their partnership with the RCSA of Vhembe with respect to pastoral care and counselling practices.

### **5.2.22 Parents’ Conferences.**

During the interviews, one participant indicated that one of the mandates given to the family committee members of the RCSA of Vhembe District was to organize single conferences and family enrichment conferences. She said that in most of the conferences that she attended there were poor attendance in the side of the divorcees because of the way they are treated in the church. Even in the conferences, they are not given good treatment. What she is saying was also seen by the researcher who went to some of these conferences as an observer and as a speaker. The researcher went to parenting conferences that were held at the following places: in 2016 (at Mukumbani); in 2016 (at Ha-Budeli); in 2016 (Ha-Khakhu); and in 2016 (at Tshanowa). The primary aims of these conferences have been to encourage parents (including divorcees) clarify their church vision of plans and objectives of caring and counselling parents; also to advance and motivate a passion for caring and counselling in these churches; and to make sure that they strengthen their parenting in the challenges of normal and single parenting and child-rearing, and to see to it that married and single parents are not continually cry from the depths of their suffering and hopelessness. However, the problem is that, divorcee’s attendance was poor. According to participants, all pastors of the RCSA in the Vhembe District have an important role to play. The divorcees complained that not much has

been done by the African pastors of these churches to answer the many questions of divorcees which, in this research, are called challenges.

### **5.2.23 Lack of pastoral care and counselling practices.**

All divorcees who were interviewed emphasized that lack of pastoral care and counselling played an important role in their losing of interest to involve themselves in church activities. Many of them indicated that they are experiencing challenges in their churches. They mentioned that they are not considered for leadership positions, are rejected, discriminated against, depressed, isolated, intimidated, and threatened; they are totally excluded from church and committee decisions. The church is failing to support them, their sex issues are not addressed, and it is difficult for us to cope with our situations because of pastor's failure to provide pastoral care and counselling to the divorcees. We no longer see the value of life. If pastoral care and counselling is given, divorcees indicated that many divorced parents would only be quick to get answers in their challenges, and would remove power to remove them, seeing challenges in others are not the cure.

During the interviews, participants also indicated that in view of the increase in these challenges in modern times and the lack of skills among pastors, African pastors of the RCSA in the Vhembe district must remember their mandate from God to communicate some of the answers and guidance in child-rearing, which is the critical in modern Africa. The lack of pastoral care and counselling affects the growth of the RCSA. During interview with the participants, some divorcees made it clear that in their churches, church membership is declining. The reason of this declining is that some church members who are divorcees are moving to other churches while others decided to go nowhere but decided to stay at their homes. The few divorcees who remained were also discouraged. One participant mentioned that their church is about to be closed down because of a serious decline in her membership. Participant number 3, who has been a member of a church for a period of 18 years and is still a church member and who experienced that painful period of membership decline, also confirmed during the interview that he felt hopeless about the possibility of rebuilding a church if divorcees are still undermined. As a man of God and an African church leader, the researcher has been given a mandate by God to investigate the challenges of divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District of Limpopo. The researcher is agreeing with what participant number 3 has said because of what he got from other participants during interview in 2016.

#### **5.2.24 Special days.**

During the interviews, one participant indicated that in the RCSA of Vhembe District, sometimes church members usually celebrates national special days such as Father's day, Mother's day as a thanksgiving to God who helped them to achieve some specific goals in life as parents. There are many celebrations held by these congregations. She said, according to her, these celebrations are not helping the church because most of the time divorcees are not feeling welcome, sometime when divorcees go there, they will comeback crying because of the way they are treated by those who are still in normal marriages. The married often used these national days of celebration to shine before divorcees who no longer have marital status.

#### **5.2.25 Inspiration.**

Under inspiration, the church is expected to inspire her members through preaching of the Word of God so that they can engage themselves in pastoral care and counselling. Pastoral care and counselling is not supposed to be of few people, but for all, young and old, men and women, boys and girls. The preacher's task is to preach in such a way that everybody within the church accepts the responsibility of involving himself or herself in the pastoral care and counselling of the divorcees. The preacher can do this through preaching in the pulpit during church services or through home visitation. In their preaching, the preachers must remind church members that they are of great importance before God, they are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God (Heyns, 1980), that they may declare the praises of Him who called them out of darkness into His wonderful light. It should be made clear that God called them through Christ, they were not a people, but now they are the people of God; once they had not received mercy from God, but now they have received mercy through Christ (1 Pt 2:9-10) (Heyns, 1980). Every member within the congregation should be inspired in such a way that he or she takes as his or her obligation to proclaim the Word of God to other people, and they must not be ashamed to do it as God wants to bring the unbelievers to salvation (Rm 1:14,16) through them. The RCSA in the Vhembe District is inspiring her members through preaching for pastoral care and counselling practices. What is being emphasized in the preaching in this congregation is the fact that everybody must be involved in pastoral care and counselling practices, as it is not the work of few but the work of all church members (Kritzinger et al. 1994). The Ministers are inspiring Christians sometimes through house

visitation. The leadership of the RCSA has to inspire the members to get involved in the pastoral care and counselling practices of the divorcees. Even though church members are inspired through pastoral preaching to involve themselves in pastoral practices, but the real fact is that not all church members are gifted in the pastoral practices of the church. There should be more inspiration through pastoral care and counselling, preaching, house visitation and through literature to let every member know they are important before Christ. Church members should be ready to be involved in pastoral practices with church members, including divorcees.

#### **5.2.26 Information.**

Information plays an important role in the conviction of people to be involved in pastoral care and counselling practices of the church. If people lack information, it is difficult to involve themselves in the programme or activities of the church. For people to have knowledge, they must be provided with information. The information should be on everything that is happening in the church, what the church is planning to do in the future and what should be provided to the church members. How can the congregants be informed? There are many ways to provide the congregants with information. This can be done by providing pamphlets to the church members.

The church should have her own newsletters where her church news can be written (Kritzinger et al. 1994). Christians should be encouraged to have the church newsletter so that they can be informed about the church caring and counselling ministry. Technology makes it simple nowadays to spread information to church members. There are telephones, e-mails, etc. that can be used to spread the information with ease to church members. Those who do not have access to the technological ways of spreading information can be provided through home visits.

The RCSA of Vhembe District uses many ways of spreading information to her members. They use e-mails, church announcements, telephone, etc. People have knowledge of what is being done in the church. Sometimes information is spread to the members verbally, especially during congregational conferences or congregational church services. This makes it easy for the church members to be informed about the church's vision, and her plan. Every year, the RCSA in the Vhembe District provides church members with year calendar, where all church activities including conferences are clearly indicated. However, the ways of spreading information are not all used in this congregation;

the congregation should also develop a church newsletter to spread information. Nowadays there are technologies that are also good in spreading information, for example, through videos, compact disc or DVD and radio cassettes. In the places where there are church buildings, notice boards should be used for placing information for the church members.

### **5.2.27 Interpretation.**

The church should provide a full interpretation of what the Gospel of Jesus Christ is all about. The preacher must interpret the contents as well as the Gospel demands from the congregants. The preacher must also fuel the expectation on how the vertical and horizontal dimensions fuse into one message of the Kingdom of God. It should be made clear in the message that God loved the world in such a way that He gave His only begotten Son Jesus Christ so that whoever believe in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life (Jn 3:16). It should also be made clear that those who do not believe in Jesus Christ, will perish (Jn 3:36). Reiteration Sunday after Sunday that the Kingdom of God has everything to do with everyday lives, with the needs and cares of people around Christians is very crucial (Heyns 1980). It is of great importance in interpretation of the Word of God to indicate that visiting the inmates of local prison, caring for the sick, visiting strangers into their homes, finding jobs for the jobless, etc., are Christians' part and parcel of their message (Kritzinger et al. 1994). Ministers and other people who preach the Word of God should be in great pains to interpret the Word of God to the church members, what the Gospel message really is, what the consequences of believing in Jesus Christ in both society and in their day really are. The interpretation of the message, the full interpretation of what the Gospel of Jesus Christ is all about, as well as the demands of the Gospel is well interpreted by leaders of the RCSA to the congregation. This was confirmed by 82% of the church members who indicated in response to questionnaires that they develop their spiritual life by attending Sunday worship services, Wednesday services and through group services where the Word of God is well interpreted by the church leaders. They reiterate, Sunday after Sunday that the Kingdom of God has everything to do with their everyday lives, with the needs and cares of people around them. They are taught to obey the command of love, which implies that they must involve themselves in proclamation of the Word of God to non-believers. Kritzinger et al. (1994) is of the opinion that to motivate the congregation, the leaders should take great pains to interpret to the believers what the Gospel message really is, what the consequences of believing in Christ, in our society, in our day, really are, that is what the leaders of the RCSA in the Vhembe District are to do.

### **5.2.28 Involvement.**

What is necessary in the church is the involvement of church members in church programmes or activities. They should also be involved in the proclamation of the Word of God. For church members to proclaim the Word of God, they must be equipped and be given the opportunity to preach. They can preach it in small group services, in church outreach, or they can preach it everywhere they go to everybody. In witness by deeds, Christians are expected to live what they preach. Before they can be involved in the pastoral practices of the church, a careful and thorough planning is necessary. The leaders of the church should create opportunities for the church members and involve them in pastoral care and counselling. If opportunities for involving the church members in pastoral practices are not created, what happens is that, the church members distance themselves from the pastoral practices of the church. They will not take pastoral as their obligation to do, but as others' obligation. For Christ involved His disciples in pastoral practices, they also knew that they were involved in His pastoral work. Every Christian is very important before God, he or she is an important member of the Body of Christ. Christ expects every member of His body to be involved in obeying His command of love, in bringing the non-believers to repentance. The leaders of the RCSA in the Vhembe District must always involve church members, not only telling them what to do, what to say, but also to get them to the actual point of doing it. To involve the church members in pastoral care and counselling requires careful and thorough planning. Opportunities are created for Christians of the RCSA to be involved in pastoral practices. The plan made in some of the fellowship centres of this congregation is to group members in small cells, so that everybody can learn and involve him or herself in pastoral care and counselling. All believers are taught to acknowledge that they are important before God. They are taught that no one should regard himself or herself as of less importance before God, and as a result, distance him or herself from doing pastoral practices.

### **5.2.29 Instruction.**

People require proper instruction, training and pastoral education so that they can involve themselves wholeheartedly in pastoral work. This helps the Christians to enjoy the pastoral practices, but if they are not well instructed or trained, pastoral care and counselling of the church will be unsuccessful because they will be lacking knowledge on how to do pastoral. The church should include training

courses in her programmes. Instruction of church members could be done in small group services like confirmation classes, cell groups, Bible Study groups, etc. Besides, in small groups, instruction could be done in congregational worship services, pastoral conferences. Church leaders must not just instruct people for the sake of doing it, but they must spend time in doing this so that they can be quite sure that instructed church members would be able to do the work correctly. Christ spent enough time in instructing His disciples for the work (Mt 10). When He sent them to do the work, He was convinced that they could do the work the way He expects them to do it. Instruction of members for pastoral practices is one of the vital roles the RCSA of Vhembe District is called to do. In these churches people require proper instruction; training and pastoral education so that they can understand pastoral practices and involves them in it.

Training conferences are being offered in this congregation. Those members who are involved wholeheartedly in pastoral support of the church are those who were positively involved in training offered by the church leaders. Instructions are also given in small groups like cell groups, Bible Study groups. Besides in small groups and training conferences, instructions are given in congregational worship services through sermons, in pastoral seminars and in pastoral conferences. In these churches, there is pastoral teaching and preaching that motivates each member to consecrate him or her fully to the Lord for the fulfilment of His purpose (Rabali, 2005). The pastoral responsibility of each believer is set forth from the Word of God.

### **5.2.30 The cure of souls.**

Pastoral care within the tradition is linked to the biblical image of the shepherd: “The Lord is my shepherd.” Jesus informs his hearers (Jn. 10:11). Jesus is not just like a shepherd; the lord is my shepherd. Pastoral care is about the cure or care of souls.

### **5.2.31 Fear.**

Divorcees struggle with fear. People are tormented by the experience of fear of social, psychological and physical challenge (Manala, 2005). The person is confronted with various questions. Louw (1994:131-132, 1995:39-40) lists the following: fear of rejection – the divorcee could feel profoundly rejected by God and experience God as being obscure and hidden: Who is my God? Is he a tyrant or a friend? Fear of rejection, especially by God, brings with it profound feelings of helplessness and

emptiness. Bayley (1996) lists a number of questions people ask when disaster befalls them and states that, underlying such questions is the basic fear: Does this disaster mean that God has rejected me? Such questions reveal these peoples' quest for reassurance that God is truly and faithfully on their side.

### **5.2.32 Identity crisis.**

Divorce fills a person with questions about her or his identity. People who once had good marriages and were proud of themselves become uncertain who they actually are, after being divorced. One asks her/himself: Who am I? Am I still the same person? Am I acceptable to my people, especially my relatives and church members? Louw (1988) points out that societal perception about the identity and morality as well as the negative labelling of people living with the pain of divorce have an enormous impact on people who live with the epidemic. Others see a divorcee as a failure and as one who has brought misfortune on him-/herself by leading a sinful or immoral life. In many cases, such perceptions result in a severely damaged self-image and an inferiority complex. In the African context in which Ubuntu is central, the harm done to one's identity because of such destructive perceptions becomes exaggerated. In that context, others and their opinions are quite important in forming and maintaining one's identity and self-image. If other people become judgmental and label one, they destroy one's identity. In this way, the person living with divorce loses a sense of her/his own identity. It is therefore not surprising that a divorcee sometimes experiences society, especially church people, as alienating hypocrites. The African community with its group orientation, mutuality, interdependence, love and mutual respect could probably make the Christian ministry more accessible to suffering people.

### **5.2.33 Struggling with the question of meaning.**

Divorce makes one wonder what meaning there is in living since the scourge obscures the future and denies hope. Being a divorcee therefore involves suffering. The following questions are inherent in this context: Does this suffering have any meaning? Do I still want to live or would suicide be a possible way out? For the distressed people who are divorced, it is not even possible to ask if suicide could be a possible way out. They would rather ask whether suicide would end this divorce-engendered sense of meaninglessness. Divorcees through sexual intercourse struggle with the

question: Does someone still love me? Divorce takes away the fun and pleasure that sexual intercourse used to bring to human experience. Part of the question of meaning is the struggle with fate. Why did this happen to me? This is especially true of divorcees who are innocent. In their opinion, they have done nothing wrong and do not deserve to face this challenge.

#### **5.2.34 Confusion.**

According to Manala (2005), divorcees are emotionally confused. Divorcee could become more confused and depressed, and feel helpless and weak. Loneliness and negative thoughts determine the thought processes and perceptions of divorcees. For those who are not breadwinners the confusion is heightened further by the worry about his/her dependants. How can they survive without any assurance of support? The Christian Ministry should be able to provide an alternative environment. The environment of familial closeness and serviceability found in the Afro-Christian context should be able to provide the needed care and assurance.

#### **5.2.35 Guilt.**

Divorcees are struggling with guilty. They lead a life of self-castigation. They often express statements such as: I have made a mess of life. They often feel guilty and blame themselves and ask questions: What have I done wrong? What do I leave behind? How will people remember me? They often think that they could have done something to prevent divorce. Furthermore, they explore the magnitude of their own shame, the value and possibility of forgiveness and self-forgiveness, and ask: Could I accept and forgive myself? (Louw 1994, Ward 2000). It is clear that the anguish and anger felt by people living with divorce are often suppressed and directed internally. Their entire ego structure and self-esteem could therefore be negatively affected and even destroyed because of internalized anger. The Christian ministry that is designed on familial principles of intimacy, mutual trust and interdependence could help divorcees to cope.

#### **5.2.36 Prayer.**

According to Redding (2012) prayer plays an important role in pastoral care and counselling practices of the church. As we get involved in people's lives and identify with their struggles, many of the divorcees will desire prayer. In our situation, what we pray and how we pray will speak

volumes about our faith and what we truly believe about God. Jesus teaching suggests that prayer is a learnt activity. The prayer Jesus gave his disciples is still instructive for us. Every word counts. If the Lord's Prayer has a lot to teach us about prayer, pastorally, it can be very helpful to encourage RCSA to pray for the divorcees who are in pain. Some of the great pastoral like Psalm 23 and Psalm 121 serve this purpose particularly well. Preaching and teaching about the importance of prayer should be done. Church members must be taught to pray for divorcees, and to pray for pastoral care and counselling practices of the church, so that God can bring healing and cure of the souls through the pastoral care and counselling. Through prayer, RCSA should be able to ask power, strength and good health from God so that they can do pastoral care and counselling without any fear. They should be able to see the necessity of many church members who should engage themselves in caring and counselling divorcees as Jesus Christ saw the necessity of many caring (Mt 9:37-38). Christians should be encouraged to have prayer partners. Prayer groups should be developed within the congregation. The people, who are unable to participate in care and counselling, can be involved in pastoral care and counselling through prayer. The RCSA in the Vhembe District are praying churches. The divorcees of these churches sometimes preach on the importance of prayer and on the impact of prayer in the life of a Christian. Teaching and preaching about prayer takes place in prayer groups and in different conferences. Christians are also encouraged to pray in their homes. Prayer teams and impact groups are formed in such a way that every believer is encouraged to pray. Through constant and disciplined intercession every member of the congregation, young and old, are encouraged to become co-workers, partners in prayer, in mission work and this motivate them to involve themselves in mission work.

Churches are encouraged to pray in a sensitive way. Pray for physical, psychological, and spiritual healing of a divorcee. In prayer, church membership should include a request for divine blessing on all the counselling. This prayer is part of the pastoral task which the pastor has been called (Acts 6:4) (Adams: 1979).

### **5.2.37 Hospitality.**

According Redding (2012) hospitality serves important pastoral purposes of making people feel welcome and providing places of belonging. Interestingly, the root meaning of the Hebrew Word for salvation in the Old Testament is "to make room for," or "create a space for." An integral part of

hospitality from a biblical perspective is about making the stranger feel welcome, making space for those who are not like us.

### **5.2.38 Care.**

Redding (2012) stated that Christians do not have a monopoly on acts and compassion. However, such acts do lie at the heart of our calling to follow Jesus (Matt. 9:35-36).

The RCSA in the Vhembe District would succeed in pastoral care and counselling.

The researcher's opinion is that all Christians have a duty to exercise their gifts (1 Pt 4:10). In Ephesians 4:16, it is clear that the ministerial power of Christ to pastoral care and counselling is delegated to the church in the form of spiritual gifts. Pastoral care and counselling is the continuing work of Christ in the world. This enablement of the church is for service. Therefore, there is a plan for the church to be equipped to minister in its particular context. When the church utilizes the power of God in church community, more and more people come under the lordship of Christ. The result of this is that the church grows qualitatively and quantitatively (Conn & Ortiz, 2001). After completing his research on the investigations of the challenges of divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District, the researcher, as a participant observer, is 100% convinced that if the RCSA in the Vhembe District can support divorcees, divorcees will feel accepted in the churches, and they will not dream about to join other churches. If these churches start with a programme of equipping and motivating church members to involve them in pastoral care and counselling, there is nothing that will stop these churches from success with pastoral care and counselling to divorcees who are experiencing painful challenges. The researcher does believe that God who provided these churches and lifted them up from where they were will continue lifting them up to better circumstances than where they are today in caring and counselling divorcees.

### **5.2.39 The impact of pastoral care and counselling on the divorcees.**

According to Maswanganyi (1990), the Bible makes specific mention that in the last days, family relationships will come under great attack. There will be restoration of families that have been attacked by spiritual forces of darkness unprecedented in human history. It is said that by year 2000 A.D., over 80% of the parents of the world will be single parents. He said that, in my travelling

around the African continent, I have observed with deep concern the alarming escalating rate of this problem. In Africa, people find it difficult to cope with the challenges of single parenting such as being a divorcee. Pastors must be educated to give care and counselling to normal and single parents who are experiencing difficulties. Divorcees also indicated that church pastors have a great impact to the pastoral practices in the RCSA of Vhembe District. Pastors must have programme to care and counsel divorcees. During their sixth years of studying theology, of studies, pastors are given a chance to practice pastoral care and counselling to church members to see whether they can do it in a fruitful way after their completion of studies. They are involved in counselling some church members who are experiencing difficulties, some of them are teaching catechetical classes of those who are being prepared to profess their faith and to be baptized. While they were still theological students, they were also preaching at several fellowship centres during Sundays, and they were leading small groups' services like Bible Studies during the week. The theological school in these churches prepares students to be pastorally minded, especially in helping church members by pastoral practices church programmes. By focusing on this programme for a long time, the church will be able to reach many church members who are experiencing difficulties within the RCSA in the Vhembe District with the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. By following this programme, the RCSA in the Vhembe District will help give pastoral care and counselling support to also divorcees. In order to achieve this, the RCSA in the Vhembe District must support and encourage many spiritually married and unmarried church members' men to support divorcees. The more these churches have many good heart of caring to divorcees, the more the divorcees will feel accepted in the churches. The real fact is that when churches want to build healthy churches, they must train good, quality, visionary church pastors, church leadership and church members who will take the programme of doing pastoral care and counselling as their responsibility for life.

#### **5.2.40 Money.**

During interview, many divorcees of the RCSA in the Vhembe District, in responding to the question about the challenges they are encountering in life as Reformed church members indicated that one of their challenges is money. They indicated that they have money, but it is not enough to make them continue in life. This is caused by the fact that some of them are not supported by pastoral care and counselling. According to them, what should be done is that: more home visits that is focused on providing pastoral care and counselling will help divorcees to know that God is their money provider,

money does not belong to them, but it belongs to God, (Hg 2:8). When they are supported by pastoral care and counselling financially, God will heal them financially through deacon church council. According to RCSA Order by Vorster (2003, p. 45), article 25 said that

*“The essence of office of deacons is to collect the money and goods given to the poor as gifts of love and to distribute these gifts diligently, after joint deliberation, according to the needs of both the needy and other church members. It is also their duty to visit and comfort those in need and to ensure that the gifts are not wrongly applied. The deacon must report to the church council considers it applicable”.*

The work of deacons was clearly defined in the early church. Acts 2:42 and 4:32-37 describe the mutual care for believers in the congregation of Jerusalem. The RCSA order emphasize that house visitation is to be done with the sole purpose of comforting those in need with the Word of God and to inspire Christians to care of the needy.

#### **5.2.41 Building a new home.**

During interview with participants, it became clear that after divorce, building a new home is a serious challenge in the life of a divorcee. After divorce, some divorcees rent or hired houses, or pay a bond. This was confirmed by many divorcees who have been interviewed with an interview guide questions; they indicated that there are “as divorcees we have experience the challenge of having or getting new home/house. They further indicated that they have this problem because they do not have enough money to build their own houses but they are presently working on this challenge so that they can have their own buildings, houses. In a rented house you will not feel free and protected, since you could be disturbed any time. The disturbance of staying there with children is that it creates terrible confusion for the divorcee and his/her children. The consequences might be of losing a lot of money by renting that should benefit you too can start building your new house.

#### **5.2.42 Specific ways of supporting divorcees through pastoral care and counselling.**

According to the research findings, the ways to support divorcees will necessitate understanding what these divorcees have experienced, becoming aware of their needs, identifying obstacles that must be overcome and determining specific ways to meet needs. Support must be provided for both

divorcees and their children. Challenges must be identified. In the past, Church members and pastors have frequently overlooked the needs of divorced families. Many believers view divorce as a violation of God's most sacred bond and they refuse to be associated with it in any way. For many years, Christians have treated people from broken homes with disdain. Christians did not help those involved with divorce, even innocent victims. Today divorce has become part of our African culture. Even a growing number of believers have experienced divorce, some as children, and others as adults. Nonetheless, some Christians and local churches in Africa continue to ignore their obligation to help divorcees. This occurs for a variety of reasons. Some fear that loving divorced Christians would suggest that divorce is acceptable. Yet, such thinking is unbiblical. There are Christian couples who consider divorced adults a threat to their marriage. They deliberately avoid socializing with them out of fear that a divorced parent might draw their mate away from them. Such concern is understandable. Christians must and can protect their marriages. Yet, they cannot neglect their obligation to minister to fellow believers in need. Following Biblical principles can provide the necessary precautions when ministering to other adults. Many born-again believers, realizing that divorce is contrary to what God desires, feel awkward toward divorcees. They are unsure how to socialize with a divorcee and his or her children. During interview, one divorced mother shares her experience;

*“I've found church to be the most depressing place I know. I feel more alone there than I do at home . . . . People seem uncomfortable around me, they afraid of me. Another participant indicated that most Bible-believing churches are couple-orientated in their preaching, teaching and social activities. Unfortunately, divorcees often feel left out. The problems that divorcees face in our churches can involve more than being overlooked.”*

They bear the pain of insensitive criticism. During interview, one participant explains:

*I've had two Christians tell me that I'm paying the consequences of my sin and that I'm not living in the centre of God's will. When I asked them for a shoulder to lean on, this is what I got. I'm already aware of this and would have preferred a little compassion to their well-meaning clichés.”*

Too often church members are quick to assign blame but slow to provide help. Some children in the churches are not allowed to play with children of divorcees. According to Ayenkeye (1991), practical training must be provided, pastors must preach and teach the whole counsel of God. They must provide instruction concerning the compassion of believers toward others. An honest pastor will inform his people as to the different views regarding divorce and explain and defend what he believes. Yet, whatever position a pastor holds, it is essential that he teach his people their responsibility to love those who have experienced divorce. It is the pastor's responsibility to equip church members to support divorcees and their families. The pastor must educate himself as well as his people concerning the pain of divorcees. The best way to understand real needs is to ask divorced parents what their challenges and needs are and how they can be better met. Instruction should include exposing unbiblical attitudes and challenging Christians to accept Biblical responsibilities. People must be prepared to meet needs and avoid challenges. Family enrichment conferences and church services could be a vehicle to help pastors and church members understand what the Bible says about divorce and how Christians should relate to divorced families. Christians must understand that showing Christian love toward families of divorce does not mean you encourage divorce. It is important that pastors and the whole congregation receive practical instruction concerning how they can support and help. Divorcees should not be refused help by godly men and women in the church because they are not "safely married." The pastor must share with his flock how he and his wife avoid unbiblical relationships with adults of the opposite sex and teach his people how to do the same. Training must include recommendations of how people can meet needs. Church members must be commissioned for active duty. Deacons should be assigned divorced-families to check on. Challenging the congregation from the pulpit is a beginning. However, individual members should be personally asked to get involved. Those who head up different ministries should know the divorcees and their children they are ministering to and make sure that they support them. The church leaders can be encouraged to think of projects or activities that might benefit divorced families with one parent. Parents as well as other adults who are trying to help must understand this principle.

#### **5.2.43 Spiritual needs.**

During interview with participants, one participant indicated that divorced parents need a growing personal relationship with Christ. Apart from this, they will face their battles without the power and comfort that God alone can supply. Christian friends and pastors must encourage spiritual growth

but also recognize obstacles that commonly hinder such growth. At a time when pressures are intense and emotions are strained these moms and dads face a myriad of spiritual battles. Many become bitter towards God because they feel that He too has abandoned them. Divorced parents who are without Christ need a Christian neighbour or friend to show them God's love and share with them God's plan of salvation. Crisis often provides occasion to share the gospel. God's people should be sensitive to those opportunities. Unsaved divorcees need salvation but they will not listen to well-intentioned Christians who preach at them while overlooking their pain. Believers earn the right to be heard when they demonstrate their faith through tangible acts of genuine concern. The thought of a Christian home being destroyed by divorce is heart wrenching but unfortunately it is a reality for some. Although God does not desire divorce, Christians who are involved with divorce may not be forsaken by other believers.

Without the help of Christians, these parents will become spiritual casualties. When a husband leaves a Christian mother, believers should be there with encouragement and help. Those rebounding from divorce will need help understanding and applying the healing principles of God's Word. Personal Bible study as well as preaching, teaching, fellowship and opportunities for service provided in a local church are all essential ingredients to spiritual growth. Unfortunately, the divorced parent often faces many deterrents to maintaining a close relationship with God. The emotional confusion of divorce as well as new demands upon their schedules often leaves these Christians uninterested and unable to spend quality time in the Word. Once they get the children to the sitters, go to work, pick up the children, fix dinner, do the wash, clean the house and put the children to bed, little time and energy are left. For the single parent, one hectic day overflows into another with many essentials left undone. Personal Bible reading too often remains on the "do next" list. If the parent finds time to read the Word, physical exhaustion and emotional burdens hinder him from digesting the needed spiritual food. The result is a worn-out Christian who faces battles without the power of God. When divorced parents come to church for spiritual strength they usually receive little help. Many feel they do not fit in, they can't identify with the single's class and they feel awkward without a mate in the couples' class. Too often they are treated as if they have spiritual leprosy by people who are afraid to reach out. Contrary to God's desire and by no choice of their own they face their spiritual battles alone. The church and individual Christians can play an influential role in helping divorced parents grow spiritually. God designed the local church to be a vital life-line for all New Testament believers.

The local assembly provides teaching and training, corporate worship, prayer, evangelism, fellowship, breaking of bread and important outlets for serving Christ. Church members can make divorcees feel welcome by inviting them to sit with them in services or at activities. These people must be encouraged to get involved in their local church ministries. The pastor should not allow their service to be limited beyond the boundaries set by Scripture. There is no such thing as a second-class Christian and these divorced parents must not be treated as such. Pastors should play an important part in meeting the spiritual needs of divorcees within their congregations. During interview, one Christian mother received no pastoral calls or visits when her husband deserted the family." Pastors neglect their position when they abandon members during times of tragedy. Shepherds are to help injured sheep, not avoid them.

Divorcees in the local church need to be spiritually fed from the pulpit. Pastors must evaluate their preaching to insure that these believers are not being slighted. The illustrations and applications of Bible messages should be sensitive to the world of the divorcee. For parents without partners, Mother's Day and Father's Day sermons that focus on married parents alone are seldom edifying and often discouraging. When preaching on the roles of parents the pastor should be sympathetic to the needs of those living in broken homes. A wise pastor will provide biblical preaching on the home without alienating the parent without a spouse.

The teaching ministry of a local church must equip divorce-parent Christians for God-honouring living. They desperately need the fellowship and instruction of an edifying Sunday school class. It is easy to feel uncomfortable in a class whose social focus is always geared for couples. Both teacher and class members can help by anticipating uneasy situations and making changes before a divorced parent feels awkward or overlooked. Specific acts of Christian love go a long way to help these people feel they fit in- offering a ride to an activity or inviting a divorced-parent to sit with you in class. The pastor is commissioned by God to equip divorced-parents in his congregation for successful Christian living (Eph. 4:11-16). To do so, he must address the unique challenges these divorcees face such as raising children without a spouse. Most divorcees are totally unprepared for the challenging task before them. If their pastor and Christian friends do not help them with their spiritual needs, who will? The Christian who is parenting alone will greatly appreciate special instruction for that enormous responsibility. They need biblical training that relates to the challenges they face. Their needs can be addressed in a variety of ways. One-to-one Bible studies provide rich

opportunities for spiritual growth. A Christian woman can volunteer to meet once a week for prayer or Bible study with a divorced mom. The pastor must provide training, and materials for members who are willing to help. The local church that realizes the need to provide specially tailored instruction for divorced-parents will face some difficult choices. In larger churches, workshops and Sunday school classes for parents without partners can provide practical spiritual training that addresses the special challenges they face. However, separate programmes for divorced-parents have advantages and disadvantages. Such activities can unintentionally become matchmaking events among lonely singles. Nonetheless, to avoid helping these Christians with their special needs is also dangerous. Unless they are growing in God's Word and shown how to deal with day-to-day challenges biblically, they will fail the demanding tests of single parenting. If they falter, the local church that refused to equip them will share the blame. The spiritual maturity needed for quality parenting and successful Christian living is not developed overnight. Believers must realize that victorious Christian living offers no short cuts. God proves Himself faithful to those who are faithful. With the help of a loving pastor and caring Christians, a divorced-parent can be encouraged to live a God-honouring life.

#### **5.2.44 Emotional needs.**

During interview with participants, one participant indicated that following divorce, custodial parents face a variety of emotional battles. They struggle with understanding their grief, practicing forgiveness, abandoning bitterness, accepting change, and diffusing anger. Until these emotional areas are properly dealt with, the parent remains unable to effectively help his family. Children of emotionally burdened parents cannot expect much support or stability. When two people end a relationship in which they have invested time, trust, physical intimacies, and dreams, the result is emotional chaos. The pain from breaking such a relationship is intense and inescapable. One marriage counsellor said, "Before a divorced parent can start the healing process in his child he must first begin to heal the hurts he himself has suffered through divorce." Christians who are willing to develop quality relationships with divorced-parents are an invaluable resource of strength and encouragement. Parents without partners need friends who will be there to listen, to encourage and to correct wrong thinking. Believers must practice pastoral care and counselling. Sometimes, a note or a telephone call, a word of encouragement from a believer can make the difference." Divorce often produces damaging responses that jeopardize the welfare of both parent and child. The RCSA

must help divorcees to deal with their emotions such as anger, depression, fear, and other emotions and not allow these emotions to dominate their lives. The fallout of divorce usually leaves divorced-parents emotionally incapacitated. Christian friends need to help them objectively identify the causes of their wrong responses so they can make the necessary changes. Feelings of resentment, bitterness, and anger commonly plague victims of divorce. If not removed, they bring life-long misery to the one who refuses to surrender them. These emotions have immense destructive power. They produce deep animosity between former mates. Children are caught in the crossfire of demeaning comments between mom and dad. Their home life is always in the war zone. People who have been deeply hurt have an amazing ability to cling to their bitterness. Parents must be shown that this response is unbiblical and always self-destructive. A life controlled by resentment is contrary to the commands of Scripture (Romans 12:17-21) and the example of Christ (I Peter 2:21-23). Clinging to bitterness disrupts the healing process that God intends for those wounded by divorce. Victory over bitterness demands both determination and dependence upon God.

Pastors and church members can help the divorcee understand why he/she must change and how he/she can change. To be freed from resentment, one must eliminate the need for it. As difficult as it might be to practice, biblical forgiveness is the only way to eradicate the self-destructive attitudes of bitterness. Most victims of divorce will not come to this conclusion on their own, so Christian friends must lovingly encourage them in this area. God commands forgiveness to protect us from our own anger. Therefore, biblical forgiveness is not dependent upon the repentant attitude of the offender. Forgiveness can be commanded because it involves an act of the will not the emotions. A person chooses to forgive by surrendering his "right" to hurt back -- a right he does not have to begin with. When people face the dramatic eradication of the marriage bond through divorce they commonly experience grief. Grieving over loss is not abnormal but it can be extremely dangerous if not understood and worked out in a reasonable amount of time. Prolonged grief can result in self-pity, which may lead to depression -- a feeling of hopelessness, overwhelming sadness and apathy. There is a time for tears and these people need others to catch their tears. However, self-pity must be identified and dealt with. Victory over depression is available to a Christian if he will identify the sin of self-pity and avail himself to the spiritual resources God offers through obedience to the Word and cooperation with the Holy Spirit. The saying, "Do right and you will feel right" has practical significance for the depressed person. When a Christian purposes to obey and serve God even if he

does not feel like it, God can help him overcome despondency. This will involve focusing on and striving to fulfil God-given responsibilities.

#### **5.2.45 Domestic needs.**

Casey (1991) indicates that divorced parenting brings a variety of complex challenges to family living. Child-rearing which once involved two adults must now be carried on by one. During interview with participants, one participant indicated that the burdens upon divorced-parents are great. One divorced father during interview explains: *“To have a career, to have a home that's well-kept, and to raise children the way you want to raise them cannot be done in 24-hour days. You either have to devote yourselves to one or the other.”* Good parenting is necessary for children to properly adjust to divorce. Yet, how can a divorced parent be strengthened to succeed at this overwhelming task? Pastors can help them understand the effects of divorce upon children so they can identify and deal with the real needs of their children. Good literature and instruction concerning parenting, discipline, and family communication can be very beneficial. The divorced-parent without a partner can be given guidelines for parenting. Some are listed below.

- Be growing in Christ - share your burdens with Him, stay in the Word, and strive to obey Him.
- Find strength in other Christians - be willing to ask someone to pray with you, to seek advice.
- Teach your children about God in everyday situations - normal conversations, night time stories, meal time, prayers, Christian friends and church.
- Pray for your children every day and ask others to do the same.
- Do not force children to play the role of the departed parent. Children need responsibilities but jobs must be appropriate for the age and maturity of the child.
- Be honest - children might not be able to comprehend everything but speak honestly in terms they can understand.

- Praise children for good effort as well as completing tasks. Be specific in your praise.
- Make your children successful by giving them things they can succeed in.
- Make spending time together a priority. Plan for special time with your children on a regular basis. It need not be long or expensive.
- Never criticize your ex-spouse in front of your children.
- Do not make children undercover agents.
- If at all possible, maintain the stability of the home environment- same school, same church, same house.
- View your children objectively. Ask a trusted family friend to share their opinion of your children's needs.
- Tell and show your children you love them.

Divorced-parents need to know that with God's help they can be good moms and dads. A simple compliment on their parenting can be a great boost. Those rebounding from divorce are often overwhelmed by the weight of unfamiliar duties in day-to-day living. Divorced single mothers worry about what to do when the furnace does not work or the car fails to start. They cannot afford to pay a professional but are not capable of fixing it themselves. Divorced single fathers, in addition to working, must prepare meals, shop for food and clothes, clean house, and sometimes nurture little children. Women are often burdened with making big decisions or challenging a salesman who does not keep an agreement. These are real problems that do not go away.

Single-parent families encounter a variety of domestic challenges. Individual Christians must recognize needs and think of creative ways to meet them. Some general areas to keep in mind are suggested below.

- Emergencies: Friends can offer to help in specific emergencies -- when a car stalls, when a child becomes sick at school, when a water pipe breaks at home. Make sure the divorced-parent knows your phone number and when you are usually home.

- *General home-maintenance and repairs:* Deacons and close friends can discern needs and offer individual help or schedule a workday. Adult or teenage Sunday school classes can also get involved -- seeding a lawn or painting windows. Men can set specific times for car maintenance. A female friend helping a single mom weed the garden can provide a wonderful time of fellowship as well as lighten the workload.
- *Major purchases and decisions:* Friends can offer their presence. A woman who has never purchased a car or lawn mower will appreciate someone going with her. Parents without partners should be encouraged to talk to friends before making big decisions. They need not carry these burdens alone.
- *Finances:* Some women may lack experience in balancing a cheque book, buying car insurance, or paying bills. A business minded church member can provide needed instruction. A church can supply funds for camp, Christian Day School or unexpected bills.
- *Practical instruction:* A mother might be unfamiliar with the location of the breaker box or water shutoff valve. A dad would benefit from knowing how to wash different types of clothing and how to prepare balanced meals. Friends should ask if they can help.
- *Role models:* Divorced parents will appreciate a Christian man or woman providing a positive role model for their son or daughter. Men can take boys without dads to the father-son breakfast and women can invite girls to the mother-daughter banquet
- *Personal time alone:* Friends can offer to watch the children while the parent shops for personal items or goes for a walk.
- *An advocate:* Single-mothers may be treated unfairly by a salesman or a service garage. A phone call or a visit to the store by a man from the church can sometimes help rectify the situation.

Acts of kindness soothe the troubled soul. Single parents need more than promises or offers to help. God has commanded His children, "Let us not love with word or with tongue, but indeed and truth" (I John 3:18). There is much that local churches and individual believers can do to help. It will

demand more than saying, "Call us if you need anything." Christian love does not wait to be requested. The opportunities for meaningful ministry are there. Believers must take the initiative to help those in need.

#### **5.2.46 Social needs.**

According to Casey (1991) if Christians are to help divorced parents spiritually, they cannot ignore them socially. Unfortunately, people who have been rejected by a mate often find themselves abandoned by Christians. Sometimes they are deliberately avoided, while other times just overlooked. Pastors and church members must understand that the single parent desperately needs fellowship. Christians should know this but few act as if they do. For parents without partners to maintain their own spiritual stability and develop a strong home environment they must develop healthy relationships with other Christian adults. God designed each of us as a social being. As seen in His commands for Christians to love one another (John 13:34) and not to forsake their local assembly (Hebrews 10:24-25), God never intended His children to be isolated from other believers. God desires that individual believers function within the local church as interdependent parts of a unified body. Each member is an important component of the local body and needs those individuals who form the other parts. Like a physical body, God expects individual members of the local assembly to support one another. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 teaches that two are needed so one can help when the other has fallen. To the shame of the many Bible preaching churches, the divorced parent often has no one to help him up. Maintaining meaningful relationships with other Christians provides a needed outlet for a single parent's battered emotions. Verbalizing their feelings with a trusted friend allows them to see things more concretely. Caring Christians need not always give advice. Listening often provides the greatest help. When it is time to talk, a trusted friend can help a divorced parent be objective about his real needs and the needs of his children. God-honouring relationships with other Christians are necessary for a single parent's spiritual and emotional stability. God uses believers to build up other believers. When a believer is isolated, God's work will be limited in his life. Christian friends can provide a balanced perspective of life that a person cannot attain on their own. Feeling accepted and belonging to a local body of believers gives the parent without a partner identity and security ·· he knows that he fits in God's programme. To be denied this acceptance is contrary to Scripture (Romans 15:7) and will arrest needed spiritual growth.

### 5.2.47 Sexual needs.

Formerly married adults will need help adjusting to singleness. They are expected to properly handle their sexuality and build positive relationships but most are unprepared for this difficult challenge. Sexual desires once satisfied within the bond of marriage do not disappear when a mate leaves. One divorcee who had been recently divorced after twenty years of marriage asked a researcher

*"How long could you go without sex after having it regularly for years?" Combined with the loneliness that accompanies divorce, I faced great temptation for physical intimacy. The sexual challenges that I encounter are real and must be addressed with biblical answers. The Bible is clear -- sexual intimacies, though formerly enjoyed, are now forbidden for the single parent. Yet, the world I live in bombards me with sexual stimuli. I need more instruction than being told that "God is my husband."*

The pastor cannot forsake his obligation to help divorcee deal with these challenges. Pastoral care and counselling is need to a divorcee to address his/her sexual needs.

### 5.2.48 Summary.

Broken homes have become a painful part of African culture. As a result, many children of divorcees have been forced to bear the heavy burdens that parental separation brings. This study has examined the need to minister to the young victims of divorce. The first section, "Understanding Children of Divorce, considered the statistics of divorce, the experience of divorce, the effects of divorce, and the response of children to divorce. Over one million children a year encounter the separation of their parents. The number of young people who live in single-parent homes because of divorce continues to multiply. This epidemic has invaded every community throughout Africa. Most of the children involved end up in a home where the mother functions as both parents. The divorce experience is not a point-in-time courtroom event. Children are exposed to emotional turmoil prior to, during, and following divorce proceedings. A variety of factors make the post-divorce environment troublesome --diminished parenting, relocation (loss of home, friends, neighbourhood), strained parental relationships, lower living standard, loss of a sex role-model, conflicts of loyalty. Divorce is a traumatic experience second only to death. In the past, family counsellors have

suggested that the wounds of divorce are minor and temporary. Today, research and the personal testimony of those from broken homes indicate that divorce has negative effects that can last a lifetime. Scars from divorce are not easily avoided. The collapse of the family structure affects a child's understanding of commitment and love. It often creates a confusing web of disconnected relationships within the family. Single parents have limited time and emotional resources to help their children. Young people are left to sort out their pain and sorrow alone. Children respond to divorce in many ways. Although each child is unique and each home is different, some responses are predictable for specific age groups. Young people from broken homes fight separation anxiety, feelings of rejection, fear, anger, grief, depression and self-blame. The majority of children strongly desire for their parents to reunite. In spite of the many serious problems these children must deal with, they are not condemned to a life of misery. With the help of God and the love of God's people, these children can learn to deal with their problems and live productive lives for God.

During the interviews with participants, many participants told the researcher that divorcees are to be supported, and their challenges and needs are to be answered. One divorcee indicated that meeting genuine needs necessitates knowing individual divorcees and the unique situation they face. These divorcees long for understanding, acceptance, security and long-term relationships. A stable home and the healing of the single parent must be a high priority. Divorcees will need assistance sorting out their battered emotions. Feelings of bitterness, anger and fear must be understood and properly dealt with. Their greatest need is to know God and develop a growing relationship with Him. For Christians to effectively minister to people, they must be convinced of their biblical obligation to do so. Both the Old Testament and New Testament provide commands and principles that require believers to minister to divorcees and their families. Demonstrating biblical love toward neighbours and fellow Christians is the fundamental trademark of the true follower of Christ. Although Christians provide multiple reasons for not ministering to divorced families, the Word of God allows no such option. Pastors, local churches and individual believers share the responsibility to minister to broken families within their church and community. Christians must understand the needs of divorcees and their biblical obligations to meet those needs. However, believers are to be doers of the Word and not hearers only. Ministry is not a mental exercise. Christians must put into practice what the Scriptures command them to do. Believers need to actively minister to individuals and families affected by divorce. Preliminary problems must be identified and overcome. Children from

broken homes often face difficulties within local churches and with individual Christians. Some believers feel that getting involved will condone divorce. Others fear that helping single parents might threaten their own marriage. The couple orientated preaching, teaching, and adult activities of many churches often ostracize the single parent. Divorced families are overlooked and sometimes shunned. For Christians to support divorcees effectively, practical training will be necessary. Pastors must educate themselves and equip church members for this special area of ministry. Instruction should help believers identify unbiblical attitudes and prejudices, become aware of the needs of divorced families and understand their Scriptural responsibility to love others. Christian adults can be trained to avoid wrong relationships with divorcees of the opposite sex while ministering. Believers can be encouraged to get involved in a variety of ways. Children need godly role models who are willing to develop long-term relationships that are bathed in prayer. God must be allowed to play an integral part in these relationships. Pastors and local churches can do much to meet the spiritual needs of divorcees. Meaningful relationships with caring RCSA pastor and church leadership will make a big difference. The divorced mother or father faces many emotional battles and many serious challenges. They struggle with grief, anger, bitterness, forgiveness, and accepting change. The emotional pain of divorce runs deep and must be properly healed to avoid incapacitating wounds. Divorcees need biblical counsel to deal with their feelings and challenges properly. Christians can help in the domestic realm. They can offer practical assistance in the following areas -- emergencies, home maintenance, major decisions, finances, practical instruction, and sex role models, providing the parent with personal time alone, and acting as an advocate. These moms and dads will benefit from practical instruction on how to be a good parent. The sexual challenges that single parents encounter should be addressed by pastors. Adjusting to their singleness and dealing with sexual temptation are dramatic demands upon single parents.

### **5.3 Interpretation**

#### **5.3.1 Research findings.**

From the above findings, the researcher understands that divorcees really are experiencing challenges in their daily life. These challenges are becoming worse if one who is a victim of divorce is not given pastoral care and counselling. The victims of this high divorce rate are likely to be

between 30 and 55. The challenge of divorce is a serious threat for the church growth in the RCSA in the Vhembe District. I interviewed a very miserable divorcee who was crying saying:

*“I’m so miserable. I love the Lord but I am battling from within as to whether I can leave my church or stay away from other meetings because I am hurting very badly by the way I’m treated.”*

My own observations as a researcher reveal that the overwhelming majority of divorcees were supposed to be given pastoral care and counselling support. Therefore, the church should consider all these factors while dealing with divorcees. They must understand that some of these situations may occur to anybody at any time. Church conferences can serve as a way to equip leadership on how to give care and counselling to divorcees who are experiencing challenges. If there could be proper follow-ups and implementation, new development will take place in the church; and divorcees will feel accepted. There is a sense of urgency in dealing with this case because the number of divorcees is growing in the RCSA of Vhembe District. If nothing is done to care and counselling divorcees, the church is heading for a serious collapse. Most participants agree that if divorcees are cared and counselled, they can contribute a lot in the RCSA of Vhembe District. When the researcher assessed experiences given by divorcees from different participants, he realizes that the situation in the RCSA of Vhembe District is such that divorcees really need pastoral care and counselling support. All the evidences given by different participants in the interviews point to the fact that divorcees are hurting in the church and need special attention. For instance, another divorcee who was crying said to the researcher: *“It seems like divorcees are having leprosy disease, every church member do not wants to associate with them.”* One participant pointed out that: *“It has become the culture of church to have problems regarding the involvement of divorcees in the church programme.”*

The findings of the study reveal that the majority of the participants show that the Divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District are divorced at an early age. This is even confirmed by the interview conducted to individuals in 2016 in their homes. According to them, the average age at which people in the RCSA in the Vhembe District are divorced was 39 to 44 years. This finding suggests a much younger age than that was confirmed by Carter and Glick (in Halem, 1980). Since this study

concentrated on divorce, it is indeed clear that its results had more impact on divorcees themselves. The majority of the participants revealed that church members and family members abuse divorcees.

The Research findings also indicate that the majority of the participants obtained their education up to tertiary level. This finding confirmed that most of the participants have received formal education and their general academic achievement at a very high rate. These tallies with the writer's assumption that divorce occurs from lower to higher socio-economic group in the RCSA in the Vhembe District. Some of the participants were married by customary and traditional union, some are in monogamous marriages and some are in polygamous marriages. The majority of this population contracted their marriages according to customary and traditional union. The majority of the participants were married for ten years and less, which indicated that contrary to the traditional belief and expectation about the permanence of marriage, some were divorced early in the marriage. Some of the participants stayed alone as husband and wife. Some are staying with the members of the extended family. Some of the participants were divorced due to desertion as a result of migratory labour. This is consistent with Schapera's (1953) view as quoted in chapter two that there is an increasing tendency for men to stay longer in their places of employment and many cases as the growth of urban population shows, they never return at all. The consequences of this problem are that the marriage comes to an end. The research findings revealed that some of the participants did not discuss divorce as couples. The above information is inconsistent with the view expressed by Felder (1971) and (Halem 1983) which highlights the importance of negotiations between the divorcing parties, either directly through a mediator or a lawyer so as to minimize controversy and to work out an agreement. The majority of the participants indicated that there should be the services of care and counselling to resolve the challenges of divorcee. During interviews, the researcher observed that some of the participants did not communicate with the children about their divorce. This is in line with traditional culture within the region, which rules that discussion of family matters is the concern of adults alone and not children. The majority of the participants are paying the legal cost out of their own resources. In some cases, wives are granted custody of the children, in some; men are also granted the custody of children. The researcher found that challenges of divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District affects lower and higher socio-economic church members, educated and uneducated, workers and non-workers. The findings of the study have also confirmed that this population lives the modern style of life.

This research is to make church aware about the challenges of divorcees regarding pastoral care and counselling that divorcees are facing. It is to help church to realize that the number of divorcees is growing, and they are not getting pastoral care and counselling support. It is to counsel divorcees who have experienced divorce and to help them regain their dignity. Divorcees throughout history have been and are abused and rejected in different ways in the churches. They are being abused by their husbands, wives and are rejected by the church members. Divorcees of both sexes, in the RCSA have frustrated for not getting church support. In the RCSA in the Vhembe District, the majority of divorcees are not guided on the issue of sexuality. After divorce, they just live without someone supporting them and guiding them even in the issue of sex, or about sex in their everyday lives, is like the church is ignoring telling divorcees about their sexual behaviour, because in Africa it is taboo to talk about sexual matters, sex is regarded as private business. By not getting pastoral care and counselling support, many of them end up sleeping with many people, and what the church is doing is to judge them as wrong people without coming closer to them and show them the good way of life as church members. Some were in monogamous marriages, and others are from polygamous marriages. In the church, divorcees are always keeping quiet, out of rejection, denial, isolated, and depression. The silence of the church regarding the challenges of divorcees also contributes to many of challenges in their lives. Some divorcees are forced to leave the house with only a jacket. Divorcees now have children whom they cannot tell who their fathers and mothers are. It is a cultural tradition. In the church, some divorcees feel that to keep quiet is a way of protecting themselves from the curse uttered by church members. Some divorcees are destroyed by church members' gossip about their divorce situation. The RCSA in the Vhembe District should understand the struggling of divorcees and how their challenges affect their lives. Church is destroying divorcees physically, emotionally, psychologically, socially and spiritually. By not given pastoral care and counselling after divorce, some divorcees get sexually transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDS, Gonorrhoea, and Syphilis, by deciding to throw themselves to every men and women that they meet on the way.

The causes of divorce are sociological, economic and psychological situations among the RCSA in the Vhembe District. Economically some divorcees earn less money to run the family of single mothers and fathers. Some divorcees have psychological problems because of the divorce, unemployment and poverty. This causes hatred, desolation and loneliness among divorcees who are not getting pastoral care and counselling support. These divorcees cannot solve challenges by

themselves. Different kind of myths surrounding divorce contributes to the problem. Some say they are divorced because they are abusing their husbands/wives. People say many things about divorcees. Church members who do not see rejecting divorcees as harmful to divorcees promote this kind of myth. The church is called to break the silence surrounding divorce and speak out against rejection of divorcees in the church. The divorcees need pastoral care and counselling support. Divorcees need to know that they are not insane; they are not fit to be admitted at the psychiatric ward or see life as the end. They need pastoral care and counselling to restore their dignity and self-respect. They need not to feel ashamed or guilty. All of the above caring can take place under the auspices of the church, by the pastoral counsellor or carer. The pastoral counsellor should support divorcees and take an extra healing journey alongside the divorcees to encourage, to transform their lives and to strengthen their faith. They can be encouraged to read certain texts from scripture, for example, Ps. 23, and other Bible verses. Some divorcees see the church as the last place where they can call for help.

The pastor (with his church elders, his wife) should visit divorcees and pray with them as a way of showing support. They should also preach about issues that cause rejection of divorcees in the church of Jesus Christ who is a God of love. The church as the Body of Christ is responsible for its members and for human beings as a whole. The church today should uphold its moral values concerning sexuality while dealing with the people who undergo many social and economic changes. The church should speak out against sexual injustice and help people to recover a sense of sexual wholeness, by educating its members (including divorcees) how to behave morally. Sexuality is a gift from God and should be treated with respect. The pastoral counsellor should assist divorcees to think about remarriage after the pain of divorce, if they feel that they cannot leave a lonely life. Only through forgiving himself/herself will the divorcee be able to heal his/her inner wounds. The pastor can use different kinds of methods to break through the crisis that blocks the healing of divorcees. It is possible for the divorcees to forgive their husbands/wives, but it will not be easy to forget what has happened to them. To go with him/her on this journey the counsellor needs to use pastoral care and counselling. This relationship is to build trust between the divorcee and the counsellor so that divorcees feel free to tell their story. The pastoral counsellor should show his or her interest in and concern for the divorcee. The goal of pastoral counselling is to help a divorcee to help him/ her to deal with the challenges transcendentally and to gain new coping mechanisms.

As a researcher, I think the answers by different divorced participants in the interviews are revealing a lot of what is going on in the RCSA today. However, many church members are becoming aware of this challenge. Some are ready to be given pastoral care and counselling to improve their situation and to feel accepted.

### **5.3.2 The way forward: practical suggestions from participants.**

This is a great challenge for the RCSA. The church should break the silence surrounding divorce in the following ways:

- The church should speak openly about divorce.
- The church should pray for divorcees.
- Pastors should preach at church services about divorce.
- The church should condemn the rejection of divorcees and work towards changing it.
- The church should find ways to help prevent divorce.
- The church should open up discussions about divorce between women and men.
- The church should challenge the patriarchal system in the culture of the people of the Vhembe District.
- The church should hold special church services for divorcees and use a liturgy that is created to touch the experience of the divorcees. It is the responsibility of the church, also to give unconditional support to divorcees.
- The pastor should listen to the story of a divorcee and believe him/her. He or she should make it clear to the divorcee that it is not his/her fault.
- The pastor should allow a divorcee to talk and talk and just listen and be there with him/her in respect and humility.
- The pastor should accompany a divorcee in his/her journey of healing.

- The pastor should encourage a divorcee to attend pastoral counselling. There are several ways, in which the church can help to teach church members about divorce.
- The church can educate and train the lay people to become counsellors of divorcees.
- The church can organize workshops, conferences and seminars to inform church members about the rejection that is given to divorcees.
- The church can educate the youth about healthy sexuality and teach them about relationships of mutuality and respect to reduce the rate of divorcees.

In addition, the church can assist divorcees in the following ways:

- The church can set up a counselling centre where divorcees can receive counselling.
- The church can organize divorcees, where they can come together to share their experience of divorce and, at the same time, empower one another.
- The church can raise funds to support divorcees who are struggling financially. The church can heal emotionally, psychologically and physically scars of the divorcees.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the research findings were discussed. The experience of the participants who have challenges of divorcees with regard to pastoral care and counselling, were discussed and literature was also used in the discussion to support or argue against the experiences of the divorcees who are experiencing the challenges of divorcees. This chapter is very important because it reveals some remarkable suggestions based on the research made, that explains the situation as it should be in the RCSA in the Vhembe District. As indicated above, this research was conducted at the sampled RCSA in the Vhembe District. This chapter is one of the most important chapters in this research project because it exposes the research findings and interpretation on the objectives and the purpose of the study. The findings from the field work reveal that the RCSA in the Vhembe District has serious challenges with regard to providing pastoral care and counselling divorcees and involving them in the church activities. The researcher has combined the suggestions of other scholars and

those he personally interviewed, and justified them based on the scriptures. He highlighted his findings in both the Bible and the early church. All these findings lead him to understand that the situation as it should be in the church today is that divorcees should be supported through pastoral care and counselling in their challenges to feel accepted in the RCSA of Vhembe District

According to responses from the majority of a sampled population groups, divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District are faced with: *Discrimination, Rejection, loneliness, and lack of support, are suspected of immorality, are denied opportunity to occupy key (leadership) positions, live in pain as a result of loneliness and sometimes poverty, live in trauma, some are depressed and often unproductive, often struggle with guilt, shame and self-condemnation, are broken in spirit, heart sore, disillusioned and often starved socially.*, and are experiencing (1) psychological, (2) physical, (3) spiritual, (4) emotional, (5) domestic, (6) social, (7) sexual and (8) social challenges. The research findings also confirmed that divorcees themselves feel inferior and lack confidence to maximize their potential because they are undermined. The researcher has also found out that the challenge of divorcees and how they are treated is a global challenge. This problem is almost everywhere in the church. The research done both through reading and personal interaction with different individuals reveals that the challenge is everywhere. It affects RCSA of Vhembe District as well. In all the RCSA sampled, participants indicate that there is a serious need for pastoral care and counselling to heal and cure the life of divorcees who are experiencing challenges in life. They also suggest that if pastoral care and counselling is provided to divorcees, RCSA of Vhembe District can help a lot to restore, heal, cure, care, counsel, encourage, recognize and engage divorcees in church activities. From the discussion of the findings and interpretation, an approach to support divorcees in their caring role will be developed. The next chapter will evaluate, recommend, and conclude the study.

## **CHAPTER 6: EVALUATION, RECOMMENDATIONS, CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The researcher has taken much care to research and consult different sources and authorities while doing this project. It is out of love and concern for the well-being of everybody in the church that this project was conducted. It has already been emphasized that the church should inspire all the members to learn to affirm divorcees in the church. The practical examples cited above will encourage the church leadership to support divorcees who are experiencing challenges in the RCSA in the Vhembe District. Divorcees should be given a platform and be used within the church. I hope that this thesis will serve as a revelation to the RCSA's leadership and all church stakeholders of Vhembe District in Limpopo. Divorcees in particular will benefit a lot from this study because the church will show more to them.

This will encourage them to come out and share their personal experiences with others. When divorcees realize that they are accepted and supported by the church, they will gain more confidence to face the challenges of life. Furthermore if the church will support them through pastoral care and counselling to participate fully in the church activities, divorcees will try their best to live right because they will be proud of their church membership and will try their utmost best to preserve their positions in the RCSA. This chapter presents the evaluation of the study to determine whether the purpose and objectives of the study were achieved. This chapter evaluated the findings of the study and how they were achieved. The findings of the study enable the researcher to make recommendations that would assist in addressing the challenges of divorcees regarding pastoral care and counselling in the RCSA in the Vhembe District of Limpopo. This chapter also presents general conclusion of the study.

### **6.2 Summary of the Findings**

Supporting divorcees through pastoral care and counselling requires Christ's love among all RCSA members within the Vhembe District. To succeed, we need a caring church. The purpose of study was to investigate the challenges of divorcees regarding pastoral care and counselling in the RCSA

in the Vhembe District to develop an approach to pastoral care and counselling to support divorcees.

The following were the objectives of the study:

- To explore and describe the challenges of divorcees regarding pastoral care and counselling in the RCSA in the Vhembe District of Limpopo.
- To develop an approach to support divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District of Limpopo.

Both the purpose and the objectives of the study were achieved. The research question of the study has been answered. The study has established that the lack of support in the RCSA in the Vhembe District served as an obstacle to give pastoral care and counselling to the divorcees who are experiencing the challenges of being divorced in the RCSA in the Vhembe District. The result is that the participants struggled to cope with their painful situations of being divorcees since they did not receive enough pastoral care and counselling support after their marriage partners divorce them. Some of the participants also found it difficult to cope with the pain and the challenges of divorce after divorce, since they did not receive support and counselling from the RCSA pastors. The study has shown that it is not proper to leave divorcees struggling with pain alone. This study argues that divorce shocking news should be regarded as a serious challenge that should not be ignored and pastoral care and counselling should be provided thereafter to assist the divorcees to cope with the pain of marriage-break-up through the loss of divorce.

The research shows that divorce in the RCSA has serious psychosocial effects on the lives of the divorcees. This was manifested through the experiences of the participants as some were angry at God for allowing their marriages to fall down through divorce tragedy, and angry at pastors and church members for lack of support through pastoral care and counselling to divorcees to help them to cope with the psycho-social effects of being divorced in their day to day lives. The study has also shown that it is important for the Reformed pastors to refer the divorcee's church members who are psychologically affected by their divorce tragedy to other experienced pastors for psychotherapeutic healing.

The study has shown that pastoral care and counselling that is provided by Reformed pastors and RCSA members is more relevant in the process of healing the victims of divorce emotionally. It is

important for Church pastors and Church members to work together with divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District as well as to give them support. This would ensure that the divorcees are healed emotionally. This study indicates that prayer meetings with divorcees in their painful situations played an important role in comforting and healing their emotional pain. The support through pastoral care and counselling to be offered by RCSA pastors and the RCSA members could be vital in ensuring that divorcees are emotionally healed.

### **6.3 Redding's Ways to Improve Pastoral Care and Counselling to Divorcees**

For the purpose of this study, the pastoral care approach of shepherding was used as a theoretical framework or as a guide of the study following Graham Redding's concept of caring (2012). This approach is based on the Biblical tradition's presentation of God who cures and cares for souls. Its ways of the practice theory to support divorcees include worship, prayer, healing, care, counselling, faith formation, discipline, code of conduct, contexts of pastoral care, ministering to those who are in pain, and maintaining personal health and wellbeing. In order to come up with the solution by using this approach, the researcher will ask himself these questions: *What are the challenges regarding worship, prayer, healing? What are the challenges of care, counselling, faith formation, discipline, code of conduct, of ministering to those who are in pain, and maintaining personal health and wellbeing?* Researcher will use this shepherding approach to come up with the solution to support divorcees and to ensure that churches and church members are equipped adequately to care and counsel divorcees. From the review of literature, and the responses, opinions, views, and observations of the participants in the study, it becomes clear that the RCSA in the Vhembe District must follow Redding's ways to support divorcees to reduce the challenges of divorcees. The church can be a blessing in the life of divorcee by doing the following important things:

#### **6.3.1 Accepting divorcees.**

Acceptance provides a basis for co-relationship and co-existence in church life. Church life begins with the ability of church members to accept each other. It is important for *RCSA members* to respect the identity of the other person. Each Reformed member in the Vhembe District will be ready to accept the other, no matter the other's faults. It is in the African culture to accept each other. The purpose is to restore peace in the *church*. Rejection is dangerous in *the church* life. Rejection is

actually anti-Christian and contrary to African values. Therefore, Reformed members must guard against rejecting each other. Rejection in a church promotes feelings of disappointment in the life of a divorcee. Rejection is actually anti-Christian and contrary to African values. There is no doubt that many *Vhembe divorcees* struggle to handle and manage their painful life. Many have been divorced for years, and the church is still isolating them. Acceptance is one quality that should help to sustain church member's unity among the RCSA in the Vhembe District.

### **6.3.2 Incorporating the divorcees in the church activities.**

For pastoral reasons, what can the Church do to accommodate the *Reformed* divorcees in its fold? The Church preaches indissolubility of marriage. However, we have no perfect marriage on earth. If it happens that some partners are divorced, how can the Church incorporate them into its fold? First, it is clear that the divorcee is created in God's image and likeness (Genesis 1:27). Being created in the image of God simply means that he/she bears God's characteristics. If this is true, it simply implies that he/she is not worthless in the Church of Christ. The *RCSA* then should see the divorcee as a person who should be respected and honour accorded to him/her. The *Reformed* divorcee should be seen as part and parcel of the *Reformed* Christian community.

Secondly, the divorcee will be going to Mass and be allowed to participate in other Church activities. The divorcee should not be discriminated against. For before Christ, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, free nor slave (Galatians 3:28). The Church should look into the case of *Reformed* divorcees individually. Each case should be investigated and those that merit annulment will be encouraged to seek for Church annulment. The challenges of divorcees must be solved as soon as possible. They must not be isolated; they are the children of the living God. If the Church annuls any marriage, it allows the divorcee to remarry. This is why it is important for the partners in the church to seek for annulment. If partners have married before in the Church, their first marriage must be declared null. However, for pastoral reasons, it is encouraged for the partners to seek for counselling.

Counselling is important for partners to avoid the mistakes they made prior to their first marriage. The researcher is calling on the *RCSA* to be serious in handling the divorcee's cases of annulment. This process will help to afford each divorcee in the *RCSA* in the Vhembe District the opportunity to be heard. Annulment is the best means to accept the divorcees into the fold. If the annulment

process goes through, it simply means that the divorcee will partake in the Eucharistic meal or banquet and church activities. Unfortunately, the children feel the mistakes of divorce. Some children from divorced parents are socially, psychologically, mentally and spiritually affected. However, the depth of effects depends on the age of the children at the time their parents divorced. If the parents divorced when their children are still below two to three years old, the children could experience family crisis. The researcher is asking pastors to put in shape programmes that will assist divorcees and their children of divorcees to cope well after divorce.

The researcher believes that the effects of divorce could be highly felt by children in the elementary or primary schools. In *the RCSA* community, if parents are divorced, it means that pastors could help the children in primary schools. If this happens, some children could relocate to a place they are not familiar with, whereby, affecting their education. The separation of their parents could also affect the children on how they relate to people. This could also affect them even as grown up children. These children could experience pain, frustrations, resentment, grief and/or anger. Attempts will be made to involve these children with social activities such as sports, Church programmes, and other recreational resources. These programmes will go a long way to strengthen their family lives. In *RCSA* community, pastoral care and counselling is lacking to divorcees and their children. However, pastors and churches and church leadership must develop programmes that will support divorcees and their children. The researcher believes that this will help divorcee and their children to adjust and to cope.

### **6.3.3 Caring for and counselling divorcees.**

Many pastoral encounters will entail some form of care and counselling. Pastoral care and counselling takes place in the context of a pastoral relationship, which itself is in the life of a pastoral community, which we call the church. It will utilize the tools of scripture, ritual, prayer and community support as appropriate. It will have a strong faith component, consistent with its focus on the “cure of souls.” Pastoral care and counselling is one of the most important-if not the most important.

#### **6.3.4 Faith formation.**

A key aspect of pastoral care will be the encouragement that is given to people to keep growing in the Faith, personally and in community. In 1 Corinthians 3:2 a contrast is drawn between infants in Christ who are fed with milk and spiritually mature people who are ready for solid food. Some people show no desire to move beyond the infant stage; however, allowing people to stagnate in faith is not good pastorally. A stagnant or underdeveloped faith will be less able to cope with challenge and change. Opportunities for growth might include home-groups, Christian education programmes, baptism and confirmation classes, prayer groups, personal mentoring, spiritual supervision, spiritual disciplines, journaling, personal devotions, reflective reading of scripture, pastoral conversations, spiritual retreats, mission and outreach activities, and courses in biblical studies and theology.

#### **6.3.5 A code of conduct.**

Pastoral care to divorcees involves the formation of special relationships characterized by openness and trust. These relationships are developed in a variety of settings and a variety of ways, from informal pastoral care to structured counselling situations. This Code indicates acceptable ethical behaviour for those offering pastoral care. While its focus is pastoral care, it is also applicable wherever there is a ministry relation between people. By the grace of God, we are called to serve, and through the power of the Holy Spirit we are sustained and encouraged to keep within this code.

##### **6.3.5.1 Responsibilities of those to whom we offer pastoral care.**

Pastors will deal truthfully with people, encouraging free and open discussion, upholding their best interests, rights and well-being. Pastors will respect the right of people to privacy and confidentiality of information except when there is a clear and imminent danger to those people or others, at which time they will be informed of those limits. Pastors will recognize the dignity and worth of every person and will offer pastoral care without unfair discrimination. Pastors will not abuse their position by taking advantage of people for personal, financial or institutional gain. Pastors will recognize that sexual intimacy in the pastoral situation is unacceptable and will not subject people to sexual exploitation, sexual harassment or sexual abuse. Pastors will recognize that there are limits to their competence and will refer to others when this proves necessary or desirable. They will not attempt

counselling without training. Pastors will recognize that there is a cultural context for pastoral care and will act with awareness and sensitivity.

#### **6.3.5.2 Responsibilities of the church.**

Pastors will uphold high standards of practice in ministry and work for the advancement of those standards. Pastors will exercise stewardship in the time given to ministry, guarding against both over-commitment and avoidance of responsibility.

#### **6.3.5.3 Responsibilities of colleagues and other pastoral workers.**

Pastors will promote co-operation with colleagues, pastoral workers and members of other helping professions, treating them with consideration and respecting professional confidences. Pastors will seek mediation through the courts of the church when conflicts with colleagues or others within the church community arise. Pastors will take action through the proper channels concerning unethical conduct by colleagues or other pastoral workers.

#### **6.3.5.4 Responsibilities of the wider community.**

Pastors will act to prevent and eliminate unfair discrimination in the wider community. Pastors will encourage as part of their pastoral task, participation in the shaping of social policies, advocating the promotion of social justices, improved social conditions and a fair sharing of the community's resources.

#### **6.3.5.5 Personal responsibilities.**

Pastors will use regular approved supervision to maintain accountability and a high standard of pastoral care. Pastors will use regular opportunities for spiritual growth, personal recreation and refreshment. Pastors will seek to extend and enhance their knowledge.

### **6.4 The role of the RCSA in Vhembe District as the Healing Community**

The church, also described as the body of Christ, is in the world particularly to express in concrete terms the love and mercy and grace of Christ to such people as the poor, the sick, divorcees and the needy in general. This love can be expressed by the church's visits to divorcees, to share the good

news of salvation and material resources with them, and to invite them to church services and other church activities. This would also concretise the Afro-Christian provision of required community and solidarity. The church, as Christ's ambassador, should indeed be there for the salvation and welfare of these people and to communicate the life-giving and hope inspiring message (Manala, 2005).

### **6.5 Presence Among and Identification with Divorcees**

The church should be loving to and enthusiastic about divorcees. The church's ministry to divorcees should indeed be based upon the ministry of presence. This ministry is expressed in "the moving towards, the being with, and the being part of as well as the being enthusiastic about" (Duncan 1988). This would be in line with the African community's essentially communal nature. This is quite necessary, as healing in Africa is essentially a communal matter. Masenya (2005) states: "Because a human being is only a human being because of other human beings, divorcee cannot live in isolation." The role of the church towards the needy and specifically divorcees is not easy. It involves a great deal of sacrifice. It entails involvement in the pain of people in empowering ways, with the aim of providing a better quality of life to those in pain (WCC 1990). Kgosikwena (2001) notes that to come closer to people who are living in painful challenge constitutes a Christian identification with people's suffering. Christ himself adopted this position with regard to our sinfulness. Instead of visiting judgement and punishment on sinners, he approached them with the offer of salvation based on God's abundant love.

The church should therefore understand its mission of education and caring with regard to the divorcees as a particular mode of proclaiming the gospel. The church should understand this proclamation in the light of Paul's attitude, that is, as an awake, a necessity laid upon the church by God (1 Cor 9:16). Caring for and empowering those who live with the scourge is something the church has to do at all costs. In this role of the church, the needs of divorcee should take precedence over moral considerations. To put it differently, moral considerations should not lead the church to a judgemental position that could easily jeopardize this caring task. Louw (1991) writes in this regard: Human agape or love as a moral principle requires that a person's needs take priority over judgment about any conduct or characteristic of that person. For purposes of pastoral care, all other moral concerns are secondary and operationally irrelevant.

In South Africa, Lovegrove (1990) notes the statement of the World Council of Churches that confirms the loving and redemptive role of the church: “*Our Lord came to redeem mankind, healing the sick and identifying with the outcast. We, the Church, his disciples who seek to carry on his work and to be like him, can show ourselves [to be] his followers if we too, share in the love of God for those in need.*” The role of the church is therefore to offer community, compassion and concrete help to divorcees. The role of the church in the context of divorce also entails communication of the gospel.

## **6.6 Communication**

The Christian church has as its core mission and task the proclamation of the Gospel of true salvation (*grace, mercy, love and peace*). The church’s ministry to divorcees should therefore be mainly communicative. The church should in fact communicate the life-giving message and actions to all people, especially those who feel helpless and hopeless. This life-giving message entails education and pastoral care and counselling.

### **6.6.1 Education.**

The church can play a vital role in educating people, especially in remote rural areas. The church is also a trusted educational agency because of its widely acknowledged adherence to issues of justice. The requisite education in the divorce context ought to emphasise the love of God, self-love, love of others and of the environment.

### **6.6.2 Pastoral care of and counselling with divorcees.**

Pastoral care is one of the important services the church or the healing community can render to divorcees. The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English defines care as “the process of care for somebody or something and providing what they need for their health or protection (Hornby 2000). This means that care is the task of those who are sympathetically concerned about someone. This sympathetic concern cannot be passive. It must involve a caring action by the one who is sympathetically concerned. According to Campbell and Williams (1990), the Chikankata Aids team in Zambia defines Christian pastoral care as “... a commitment to expressing God’s love and resources through service and counsel in Christ’s name.” This definition

emphasizes the Christians' expression of God's love and resources in words and in deeds. It also indicates the pertinent need for human commitment to expressing and offering God's love.

Pastoral care in the context of divorcees therefore refers to the Christian communicative actions to which members are bound by the love of Christ and through which they give the necessary attention to divorcees. The primary aim of the caregiver is to enhance the coping skills of a divorced person and to provide emotional support. The caregiver should fulfil the need for reassurance of the person who is a divorcee. The caregiver should offer unconditional love, counselling, listening and acceptance as aspects of a theology of hope (Ward 2000). Louw (1998) refers to what he terms *promissio-therapy*, which he defines as "the application of God's promises to a believer's faith functions." Seen in the light of God's faithfulness, the application of God's promises to a person who is a divorcee could indeed inspire the needed hope. Briefly, the pastoral caregiver's role is to care, comfort, accompany and offer stability of mind to divorcee. In my opinion, this could be achieved by developing a pastoral care and counselling approach of hope. According to Stone (2000), hope can be inspired through a deliberate act of focusing on exceptions to times or events that sadden and depress people. One other important aspect of inspiring hope is to let depressed people visualize positive futures for them. Stone (2000) claims that depressed people can be led to hope through a method that seeks to "focus on people's strengths; search for exceptions; re-frame hope; and create future goals as a way to move away from preoccupation with the past." These exceptions should be co-discovered with the care-seeker. This would probably empower divorcees. Henderson (1990) points to the empowering ability of assertion of hopeful living, stating: In fact, those of us who are involved with people who are experiencing the challenges of divorce and with service provision, have seen that this assertion of hopeful living can indeed sustain people through their painful challenges.

Divorcees have to be persuaded to accept themselves and to know that God and their significant others love and accept them. Total self-acceptance by the divorcees and unconditional acceptance by the community should be encouraged, with the faith community acting as role model. The faith community should be developed into a real, loving and healing community. The RCSA in Vhembe District as churches in Africa could become a real caring, loving and healing community by merging Christian values with the African community's values of love, mutuality, respect and inter-dependence. The familial nature of the Christian congregation, namely intimate fellowship, and

active caring should be emphasized. Small caring communities and peer support groups for divorcees should be established and their members trained in the art of caring, in doing practical chores for divorcees and in networking. The African perspective especially as far as it is centred on the concept of *tshumisano* or co-operative action, could be useful in providing a good basis for the needed teamwork. The Afro-Christian ministry to divorcees cannot do without prayer for divine healing. The faith community in Africa believes in and trusts God's healing power (Mbiti 1970). Prayers for healing should form part of the pastoral care and counselling strategy. According to researcher, Afro-Christian ministry to divorcees is a meaningful way of inspiring hope. The existential experiences and expectations of divorcees who are facing challenges have been sketched to sensitize the healing community to greater compassion and meaningful action. An outline is given of the role of the church in preventing the further rejection of divorcees and in caring for the divorcees. I have pointed out that the Afro-Christian approach could help transform the Christian ministry into a dynamic endeavour.

#### **6.7 Suggestion for Further Research**

The study focused only on the investigations of the challenges of divorcees regarding pastoral care and counselling in the RCSA in the Vhembe District. This study looked at the psychosocial effects divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District. The researcher gathered and assessed literature, and interviewed numerous people who have been affected by divorce to gain a clearer understanding of the phenomenon of divorce in the RCSA in the Vhembe District. However, there are numerous areas of interest that future researchers could explore. For instance, future researchers might have to look at the psychosocial impact of trauma caused by divorce to children of the divorcees who are experiencing their challenges in the RCSA of South Africa members. Future researchers could examine how money specifically affects the rate of divorce in the RCSA within the Vhembe District. In addition, future research could also investigate the role of sex education in minimizing the rate of divorce among the RCSA in the Vhembe District; such a study could advise Church leaders on how to implement a successful sex education programme. Finally, a future study could be conducted that focuses on the high rate of divorce among the RCSA in the Vhembe District. This study should examine the causes for the high rate of divorce among this specific population, and provide suggestions to assist the RCSA members in coping with the challenges of marriages.

## 6.8 Recommendations

From the research findings, it was quite clear that pastors and church members are to address the challenges of divorcees to make divorcees to feel accepted. All the investigated challenges of divorcees require serious attention. Based on the research findings, the researcher make the following recommendations that would be helpful in addressing the challenges of divorcees regarding pastoral care and counselling to divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District:

- (1) Due to the high rate of divorcees in the marriage relationships and the shortage of pastors in the RCSA in the Vhembe District, pastors should teach, equip and train church elders or lay-preachers that will be able to provide pastoral care and counselling to divorcees who are struggling with their challenges of divorce. They have to be taught how to care for divorcees in the church.
- (2) The issue of helping new divorcee's young and old, both male and female, should not only restricted to the Reformed pastors in the RCSA in the Vhembe District, but it should also be open to Church elders, Christian social workers, and Christian psychologists. These can also provide pastoral care and counselling to divorcees who are crying with their painful challenges.
- (3) There is a need for the Reformed pastors to equip and train many church elders and lay-preachers and church members who will assist them in providing pastoral care and counselling to the divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District. This will also help to improve the relationship between the RCSA pastors, elders and church members in their area where they stay with divorcees.
- (4) RCSA pastors should select and equip church elders and church members who are gifted in helping people who are struggling with painful situation in all eleven RCSA in the Vhembe District of Limpopo. Those selected will assist pastors as Biblical and lay counsellors in providing pastoral care and counselling to divorcees who are experiencing the challenges of divorce. The number of counsellors to be equipped should be done according to the size of the church. This will benefit the divorcees since

they will be able to receive pastoral care and counselling support from church elders and church members who will be easily accessible in the their local churches.

- (5) There is a need to have the office of care and counselling which will look into the matters of caring church members who are struggling in life. This will enable RCSA in the Vhembe District to answer the challenges of church members who are crying and struggling in life. The office of care and counselling should work hand in hand with pastors in findings the solutions in the different challenges of church members, to help divorcees to cope with their pain and to live well with other church members as brothers and sisters in Christ.
- (6) The Reformed pastors should support church members (both male and female) so that they can also support others. This will also give men and women who have lost their marriage partners with divorce an opportunity to share their experiences and learn from other church members who have gone through the same experiences.
- (7) The RCSA pastors should also help children of the divorcees who are also affected by the divorce of their mom and dad. This will also help children who lose hope for the future and whose future dreams may be shattered after losing parental intimacy of a father and mother who live together in one house. These children of divorcees will cope with the pain of their parents since they will be receiving pastoral care and counselling support from the church pastors.
- (8) RCSA pastors should work in partnership with healing structures or support systems in addressing the issue of stigma that is given to male and female divorcees in the Vhembe District. RCSA pastors should work hand in hand with psychologists in the RCSA in the Vhembe District to address the psychosocial effects of divorcees, to help divorcees cope with their divorce challenges.

## 6.9 Conclusion

This chapter concluded this research study, and provided a summary and conclusion. This conclusion was based on the literature review as well as data collected from the participants of the study. The

interview data were particularly helpful in providing recommendations that would help to improve pastoral care and counselling to divorcees who are experiencing challenges in the RCSA in the Vhembe District. These recommendations, if followed, would help to resolve numerous challenges of divorcees faced by Reformed divorcees in the Vhembe District. The study used a qualitative method with a phenomenological research design. The research study was carried out through unstructured interviews with individuals at their homes.

The researcher interviewed 30 participants from the RCSA in the Vhembe District. The participants were drawn from divorcees who had been divorced and who had divorced. This study had the primary goal of reawakening interest about the investigation of the challenges of divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District. This is the aim of this research – to create awareness, and to let people know about the challenges of divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District. The research findings indicated that in the RCSA of Vhembe District, churches are not supporting divorcees who are experiencing the challenges. Findings from the research also noted that divorcees are struggling in life, are not accepted, are isolated, and are regarded as lapsed Christians. It is important for the Church to examine how it could readmit these individuals back into the fold. This represents a significant pastoral care and counselling responsibility facing the RCSA of Vhembe. This study concludes that to the divorcees who are experiencing challenges, pastoral care and counselling are not the responsibility of the ordained Reformed pastors only in the RCSA in the Vhembe District of Limpopo. As indicated above, this study was conducted at the sampled RCSA in the Vhembe District.

The researcher has taken much care to research and consult different sources and authorities while doing this project. It is out of love and concern for the well-being of everybody in the church that this project was conducted. Furthermore, the researcher has tried his best to avoid any bias, both personal and from the sources consulted. Divorcees should be given a platform and be used within the church. In view of the above, the researcher argues that, to address the challenges of divorcees regarding pastoral care and counselling in the RCSA in the Vhembe District, RCSA pastors, RCSA elders, and RCSA members who are gifted caregivers should provide pastoral care and counselling support that would meet the psychosocial needs of divorcees in the RCSA in the Vhembe District. This research managed to explore the challenges of divorcees regarding pastoral care and counselling in the RCSA in the Vhembe District. The objectives of this study were achieved. The researcher has

combined the suggestions of other scholars and those he personally interviewed, and justified them based on the scriptures. He highlighted his findings in both the Bible and the early church. All these findings lead him to understand that the situation as it should be in the church today is that divorcees should be supported through pastoral care and counselling in the church. This research managed to explore the intricacies that serve as obstacle to pastoral care and counselling to divorcees of the RCSA in the Vhembe District. Pastoral care and counselling that is relevant in the emotional healing of the victims of divorce was clearly examined. The psychosocial effects of divorce on the life of divorcees were also examined. This study moved from philosophy, psychoanalysis to be psychotherapeutic in nature. I hope that this thesis will serve as a revelation to the RCSA's in the Vhembe District. Divorcees in particular will benefit a lot from this study, because the church will show more concern to them. This will encourage them to come out and share their personal experiences with others. When divorcees realize that they are accepted and supported by the church, they will gain more confidence to face the challenges of life. Furthermore, if the church will support these divorcees to participate fully in the whole church activities, divorcees will try their best to live right because they will be proud of their church membership and will try their best to preserve their positions in the church. I hope that the church community and the academic community will benefit from this research.

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## **Appendix A: Interview guide used for interviews**

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your occupation?
4. What are your challenges regarding pastoral care and counselling?



## Appendix C: Consent form

I.....hereby consent to participate in a research study titled Challenges of divorcees in the RCSA of South Africa within the Vhembe District: Towards an Afro-sensed approach to pastoral care and counselling. I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop this interview at any point should I want to discontinue. The conditions of the study have been fully explained to me and I fully understand the circumstances of my participation.

.....  
Signature of participant                      Date.....

.....  
Signature of researcher                      Date.....  
Cell phone numbers (082 474 7336)